

A Journey of Faith for Middle-School Students
A Curriculum in Discipleship for Students in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

A Professional Project
presented to
the Faculty of
Claremont School of Theology

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

By
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This professional project completed by

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has been presented to and accepted by the
faculty of Claremont School of Theology in
partial fulfillment of the requirements of the

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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ABSTRACT

This project developed from the hypothesis that the curriculum for middle school students in the First Christian Church of North Hollywood, who were preparing to make their confession of faith and be baptized, was insufficient to support them spiritually and emotionally through the difficult changes they would encounter during adolescence. The desire for developing a new curriculum was to incorporate a faith within their core values that would support their growth into adulthood.

In the curriculum, I sought to answer four questions: 1) Is it possible to begin developing, for this population, a tie between the Gospel of Jesus and living an *other-centered* life? 2) Will this population grasp philanthropy as a way of demonstrating their faith? 3) Would a class such as this give this population a better understanding of themselves as Christians and will they feel a stronger faith as a result? 4) Would the involvement of adult and youth mentors enhance the educational experience?

I tested my curriculum on a class of thirteen middle school students during and after the Lenten Season, 2018. Four months following the class' conclusion, I administered surveys to all class members, their parents, the mentors, and junior mentors. The results from all four populations surveyed were positive and indicated that the curriculum accomplished the goals I had set.

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¹ David Norgard, “An Examination of the Role of Religion in the Boardrooms of Faith-Based Nonprofits” (D.Min. project, Claremont School of Theology, 2018), iii.

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To Peggy, my wife of thirty-three years, my best friend, and my devoted partner, who is the best thing that ever happened to me and without whom I would not be alive today.

INTRODUCTION

I have been in the active ministry for fifty-seven years. Since graduation from Christian Theological Seminary and my ordination, I have spent my entire ministry in two churches. In the first, an inner-city congregation, I was responsible for the supervision of an afternoon program for middle school students, which numbered over 500 students weekly. In the second, I continue to serve as senior pastor to a suburban congregation where I have always been actively involved in the youth programs.

Middle school students have always been my favorite age group to teach. I started my career after college as a public school teacher for a brief time, then moved to directing summer conferences for middle school students and on to teaching in our local congregation. I have always been drawn to middle school students. Since taking over the teaching of our congregation's Discipleship Class² each Lenten season, I have been frustrated with the lack of an effective curriculum. The words of the Rev. Dr. William Willimon, in the introduction to his book, *Making Disciples: A New Approach to Confirmation*, first inspired me to write a new and challenging curriculum for the students in our congregation. Dr. Willimon wrote:

Following Jesus is not something that comes naturally, without time and training. Confirmation is an historic means of making Christians. Today, making Christians has become challenging work for the church. So many factors in modern life seem to conspire against the church in its efforts to make disciples. . . . This new approach . . . is based upon the belief that you and your congregation have all the requisites for making strong, vibrant Christians for today's church.³

Writing my own curriculum for the students in the church I have served for the last forty-nine years was an appealing idea. During the years that I had taught the annual discipleship class, I had continually supplemented the denominational curriculum used in the class. I attempted to

² In survey data, this class is often referred to as the Pastor's class.

³ William H. Willimon, *Making Disciples: A New Approach to Confirmation* (Inver Grove Heights, MN: Logos Productions, 1990), 1.

make it more interesting, creative, and relevant in relationship to the culture in which youth live in southern California. Traditional subjects, such as the Bible, church history, theology, and religious practices are included in the new curriculum. However, underlying all this study was an emphasis on other-centeredness and pursuing a philanthropic life style. This portion of the class emphasized the student's involvement in church and community as well as serving those that Jesus called the *least of these, my brethren*.⁴ The class enlisted the help of both adult mentors, chosen from the congregation, and junior mentors, who are high school students who have taken a shorter, similar class in the past. During each class session, all mentors engaged the students, helping with their assignment and discussing their own faith.

As I worked on the curriculum, I became aware of a poem circulating among our youth on the internet. When I heard several of our youth discussing the poem and relating it to some of their friends, I felt encouraged to pursue and complete this curriculum project. The poem is honest and disturbing. It describes the situation where many students and friends of our church youth have been in their emotional development and self-image over the last several years. The poem motivated me to write a curriculum that could help change a student's self-image from the way the poem reads from top-down to the way it reads in reverse. It was reportedly written by Abdullah Shoaib and first seen on the internet.

⁴ Matthew 25:40 (RSV).

Pretty Ugly

Top to Bottom: negative meaning

I'm very ugly
So don't try to convince me that
I am a very beautiful person
Because at the end of the day
I hate myself in every single way
And I'm not going to lie to myself by saying
There is beauty inside of me that matters
So rest assured I will remind myself
That I am a worthless, terrible person
And nothing you say will make me believe
I still deserve love
Because no matter what
I am not good enough to be loved
And I am in no position to believe that
Beauty does exist within me
Because whenever I look in the mirror
I always think
Am I as ugly as people say?⁵

Reversed: positive meaning

Am I as ugly as people say?
Because whenever I look in the mirror
I always think
Beauty does exist within me
And I am in no position to believe that
I am not good enough to be loved
Because no matter what
I still deserve love
And nothing you say will make me believe
That I am a worthless, terrible person
So rest assured I will remind myself
There is beauty inside of me that matters
And I'm not going to lie to myself by saying
I hate myself in every single way
Because at the end of the day
I am a very beautiful person
So don't try to convince me that
I'm very ugly.

The development of my new curriculum addresses such poor self-image with an emphasis on personal mission statements, the unconditional love of God, church, mentors, pastors, and the ability to find purpose in life by serving those less fortunate. The curriculum emphasizes the importance of an individual's uniqueness as a child of God and helps the student find and understand the unique gifts that each individual youth brings to the class, their peers, the church, and the world. The feelings expressed in the poem are disconcerting to anyone working with this age group. Designing a curriculum and class that could have meaning to a preteen struggling with such poor self-image became a personal and spiritual goal.

⁵ Liz Angarola, "Poem titled 'Pretty Ugly' Can Actually Be Read Two Different Ways," *Western Journal*, June 5, 2018, <https://www.westernjournal.com/lisangarola/poem-titled-pretty-ugly-can-actually-be-read-two-different-ways/>.

As I pursued that goal, I sought the professional expertise of two educators whom I personally know and respect. Sheri Werner is the founder and served as head of school of The City School, a charter school within the Los Angeles Unified School District. She is a recognized authority on middle and high school students and a published author of professional articles as well as a book on bullying. Kathleen Murvin is a credentialed school counselor. When working in a middle school located in the Conejo Valley School District, she designed a pilot program for students who were in emotional and educational crisis and in danger of dropping out of school.

In the last three years, ten congregations within the Pacific Southwest Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) have dissolved and sold their church campuses. For many other congregations, the most important task facing them is survival. Unfortunately, this focus on surviving week to week has taken their energy away from their mission in the world. My understanding is that the Church, regardless of denomination, is purposed with being missional in the world. A major part of being missional is education, not only through worship and preaching, but also through the education of children and youth. I believe that in the formative years of their lives youth need to be challenged and actively led to love Jesus, love His Church, love humanity, and find true enjoyment in living a philanthropic life devoted to serving others in the name of Jesus. Hopefully, if we are able to reach this population of youth, there will be fewer congregations going out of business and more congregations thriving through practicing creative ministry. I can think of no better way to spend the rest of my ministry than teaching youth to be faithful in their daily lives.

CHAPTER ONE

THE CHALLENGES IN MIDDLE SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

Early Encounters with the Middle School Mind

Following college graduation, I taught briefly in a six-grade school, seventh through twelfth, in Greencastle, Indiana. The school was in Putnam County, which not only is home to one of the leading universities in the nation but was also home to a large population of small family farms who lived in poverty or a near-poverty level. I enjoyed my students and enjoyed sharing in their lives. Most of them were from farm families and, having spent the summers of my childhood and adolescence on my grandparent's farm in central Indiana, I found the events of their daily lives familiar. We talked about livestock, crops, the 4-H club activities, farm equipment, and a variety of rural, small town topics. On occasion, I was invited to some of their homes for Sunday dinner.

I found these middle school students receptive to new ideas and less prejudicial in their opinions than the older high school students I taught in the last two class periods of the day. I felt at this stage of adolescence they demonstrated a sense of respect for adults and an attitude of acceptance to learning that I did not encounter in the older students. They were curious and responsive, welcoming new assignments. My only frustration was that many of my students were from poor farming families, and there was no family priority for continuing their education. The end goal, for most of these students, was to drop out of school at age sixteen and work on the farm with the rest of the family. My brief experience in being an English/Speech teacher ended when I decided to further my education and attend seminary. I enrolled at Christian Theological

Seminary in Indianapolis and spent the next four years studying and serving as a youth minister in two Indianapolis congregations.

After graduation from seminary, I chose to enter the field of Christian education, a career path I followed for over ten years, both in Indianapolis, Indiana, and Hollywood, California. Again, working with all age groups within two local congregations, the middle school students emerged as my favorite. For over ten years, I directed a summer conference for middle school students in the Pacific Southwest Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). These conferences were some of the most enjoyable experiences of my early ministry. Today, over five decades later, I see graduates of those conferences who are still active in their congregations and still remember the time we spent together.

Ministering in the Heart of Hollywood

For seven and a half years immediately following seminary graduation, I served as the associate minister in Christian education at the Hollywood-Beverly Christian Church, the oldest church in Hollywood. The church campus was located just twenty-five yards north of Hollywood Boulevard. One of my primary responsibilities was to supervise a staff of nine college students who ran Operation Youth. This was a community program for middle school students, primarily from two middle schools in central Hollywood. The program involved Friday night dances, after school social clubs, basketball leagues, and a counseling center. While responsible for the entire educational program of this inner-city congregation, my largest investment of time was with this middle school program.

The last two years of my ministry in Hollywood were the most difficult. It was during the late 1960s when demonstrations against the Vietnam War were regular occurrences, when there were record numbers of run-away youth arriving in Hollywood from throughout the Midwest

every day, when drug overdoses were responsible for the deaths of youth in the Hollywood community, when the God-Is-Dead movement was in full swing, and when the hippie culture was the prevalent lifestyle of the youth. During those years, my primary assignment was on the streets, ministering to whomever I could in whatever way was possible. I spent almost every Friday night working with social workers and counselors in the juvenile division at the Hollywood station of the Los Angeles Police Department. I dealt daily with youth, who ranged from twelve to twenty years of age, were high on narcotics, were alone in the city, had no jobs and no way—other than illegal activities—to support themselves and who were, at their very core, extremely frightened.

My life on the streets of Hollywood was not only a meaningful and challenging ministry, it was also educational and taught me important lessons that I will continue to use throughout the rest of my life. Sadly, I ended up officiating at the funerals for some of the youth I met, and I was fortunately able to negotiate the return of many runaway youth to their homes throughout the nation.

When I received the call to become the senior pastor of a congregation just nine miles north of Hollywood Boulevard in the San Fernando Valley, I accepted knowing that I had effectively burned out while working on the Boulevard. I was ready for a new and different challenge. Everything I had learned during those nearly eight years in Hollywood proved to be beneficial in my new position serving a congregation with a large youth group.

Youth and the Entertainment Industry

Forty-nine years ago, I accepted the call to be senior pastor of the First Christian Church of North Hollywood. Roughly 60 percent of this congregation makes their living in the entertainment industry. The church is located in the heart of Studio City, less than a ten-minute

drive from four major studios. The church campus is used regularly by the studios for location filming. The entire culture of our community is immersed in television, movies, commercials, music, and the theater. The church even has its own Equity-approved, ninety-nine seat theater as part of its community ministry.

Due to our location, the youth in our church are overly exposed to the inner workings of an industry which others know only from the finished products of movies, television shows, stage productions, and musical concerts. Some Christians consider the entertainment industry a negative influence on society in general and on children and youth specifically. Many leading celebrities live lives remote from any kind of Christian commitment. Many of these people are held up by the press and media as political and cultural icons. After living in this environment for most of my life, there is no doubt in my mind that the entertainment industry has had detrimental effects upon the lives of the youth population of our community.

In our community, there are an abundance of charter schools and performing arts schools whose core curriculum includes the required academics with a maximum emphasis on careers in film, theater, art and music. There is also an abundance of independent acting companies which offer young thespians acting experience and workshops during the weekends. These companies regularly have both rehearsals and performances on Sunday morning, thus providing major competition with the church's Christian education program. Willimon was right! There are many extracurricular and school activities that seem to always interfere and compete with the church's programs. It is challenging and difficult work leading youth toward a commitment to Jesus.⁶ As I came to understand in my early teaching experience in Indiana, the culture of a particular region

⁶ Willimon, *Making Disciples*, 1.

and/or socioeconomic status directly affect the youth population's attitude toward and approach to the educational process, whether this be in school or church.

It is out of my experience with our community, its culture, and my intimate involvement in the lives of many of our youth that I feel so passionate about developing a Christian education program that speaks to the entire being of middle school students—personally, culturally, emotionally, spiritually, and intellectually. My passion is to communicate so effectively with these youth that they will find great joy and satisfaction in embracing Jesus as their Lord and His way of life as their way of life.

The Decision to Pursue a New and Better Curriculum

In 2010, I reread Dr. Willimon's book and curriculum on confirmation. That year we had only two middle school students attending the Lenten Discipleship Class and desiring baptism on Easter Sunday. I felt something had to be done to reach and challenge more students to involve them in the life of the church.

The first thing I did was to choose the curriculum published by our denominational publishing house. I changed the meeting time from Thursday after school to Sunday after church. Due to the new time, we changed the format to include lunch instead of after-school snacks. We then added forty-five minutes to the class to allow for more involvement of the students. The class has lunch at 12 Noon and concludes at 2:30 PM.

We learned a great deal during our first year. The curriculum we had chosen was not interesting or relevant for our students. I found I was continually supplementing it with additional information from a variety of sources. It was obviously not written for students living in one of the largest cities in the world.

After that year's class concluded, I felt exhilarated in the teacher's role even though the curriculum had its limitations. The students responded to my teaching style and were having fun learning. The parents of some of these students were couples I had joined together in marriage. Several of the students each year were children I had dedicated as infants.

In 2016, I enrolled in the first cohort of the newly accredited D.Min. degree in Spiritual Renewal, Contemplative Practice, and Strategic Leadership. In the first January Intensive, we were introduced to the requirement of writing our D.Min. project. We were to write about something within the context of our life and ministry and about which we had a strong passion. As the first Intensive week continued, the idea of writing a new, expanded curriculum for our middle school Lenten class began to formulate in my mind. Although the response to the class by all those involved had been positive, I began to consider how much more I could add to the curriculum and class if given the time to research and expand it.

I shared the idea with several fellow Disciple students, asking their opinions on curriculum and how they taught such classes in their context. Several of them had experienced the same feeling of inadequacy with the denominational curriculum and encouraged me to develop a new one. I introduced the idea to Dr. Galloway who said it would be acceptable for a project topic. The more I thought about it, the more I knew that a new Disciple curriculum for students in our local congregation who desired to make their confession of faith and be baptized would be the end result of my D.Min. studies.

The Discipleship Class in 2016 was exciting. We had a class of enthusiastic middle school students. As the class continued from week to week, I found myself viewing everything from the point of view of creative change and how to make the class more exciting, challenging, and informative.

We needed:

- More time for the class and the involvement of mentors on a one-to-one ratio
- Special guests with fascinating backgrounds, sharing how they practiced their faith in their professions
- To introduce a segment on philanthropy and challenge the students to become more involved in philanthropic projects and causes, to adopt a Christ-like attitude of serving others first
- To build a culture of mission and plan mission trips for students during the summer months
- To plan activities throughout the year to maintain enthusiasm and allow students to have fun together as a class

Together, all these additions would help formulate the core values of our adolescent students, hopefully establishing values and moral convictions that would allow them to live as Christians throughout their entire lifetimes.

As I began to work on the outline of a new curriculum, I consulted again with Ms. Sheri Werner and Ms. Kathleen Murvin, seeking their wisdom regarding research and writing. Both ladies shared information regarding the latest research on middle school students, and both shared with me books and professional journals about this age population.

Ms. Werner recommended that I read *This Changes Everything: How the Gospel Transforms the Teen Years* by Jaquelle Crowe. Ms. Crowe was eighteen years old when she wrote this, her first book. Her approach and language is evangelical, and her passion for Jesus and her faith is obviously strong and vital. Her entire book is about what it means for a young person in today's world to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior and live faithfully as Jesus taught. In lifting this faith for her reader's consideration, she is also quite judgmental about those who are half-hearted followers of Jesus. While I found this judgement somewhat offensive, I found her passion inspiring and insightful. The following quote illustrates both the faith and the judgement.

Since we're young, now is the time we ask ourselves the ageless question: *Who am I?* Every person aches to know why they're here. We ask: *What is this thing that defines me? How am I supposed to live?* We look around and see all these

people who call themselves Jesus-followers yet find their identity in material success or good grades or popularity or clothes or their bodies or their interest or their parents' expectations. The truth for us is that Jesus-followers, young and old and anywhere in between, can only find their identity in Jesus . . . The gospel changes who we are. It literally changes everything.⁷

After reading her book and considering the impact Jesus had on her life, I believe my desire for our middle school students is to gain the insight and the skills of self-reflection which Ms. Crowe modeled in her book. I am positive that understanding who Jesus is and what it means to be His follower is the beginning of a Christ-centered life. As Dr. Willimon said at the beginning of his curriculum, following Jesus is not something that comes naturally or easily.⁸

Following Jesus means that we must acquire a set of skills and strategies taught by caring educators and experienced in the context of a loving community. This learning is fostered in the presence of mentors, both young and older, who can share their faith journey with the students. In this process, students learn the overwhelming joy and sense of accomplishment of doing something significant for others and of being young philanthropists.

As I submit this D.Min. project and curriculum, my hope is that it can be adapted for use by other local congregations, especially those located in large, metropolitan areas. They face the same frustration that we face—children growing too rapidly into adolescence without a faith to guide and protect them. I am hoping to nurture in my church's youth a passion for Jesus and His teachings. I want to provide for them a safe environment to ask questions, such as the ones Ms. Crowe raised in her book.

⁷ Jaquelle Crowe, *This Changes Everything: How the Gospel Transforms the Teen Years* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 27–28.

⁸ Willimon, *Making Disciples*, 1.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

One of the first tasks in completing this project was to research and come to an understanding of the various factors at play in the world of the middle school student. The late Dr. Howard Hendricks, who taught at Dallas Theological Seminary, said: “As an effective teacher, you must not only know that which you teach—that is, our content—but you must also know those whom you wish to teach.”⁹ The literature gives insight into the students’ spiritual, emotional, and intellectual needs.

The review of literature for this paper covers several different categories: 1) the nature of middle school students, including the adolescent mind; 2) the educational needs of contemporary middle school students; 3) faith formation of middle school students, including discipleship and commitment to Jesus and the Christian life; 4) living a philanthropic lifestyle; 5) practicing compassion within the youth culture and 6) the role of mentors.

The Nature of Middle School Students

The Reverend Dr. Bernard Dorsey touched on the first category as he began his homily at the First Christian Church of North Hollywood on June 10, 2018. Dr. Dorsey is president of Higher Education and Leadership Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indianapolis, Indiana. He is also the father of an eighth grader. This is how he described the middle school student:

Middle school students are active and smart, social and involved, self-assured and confident, and always ready for an adventure. Middle school students are lethargic

⁹ Richard Lavoie, *The Motivational Breakthrough* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007), 251–256.

and dull, lonely and uninvolved, self-doubting and unadventurous. Now, which one of those statements is true? The reality is, both are true and they can be true within minutes of each other. Middle school students are living a roller-coaster life. They go from despair to exhilaration, from being socially involved to being totally alone, from being motivated to being totally bored. Middle school students are of great concern, not only to schools, parents and society, but also to the church today.¹⁰

Dr. Dorsey raises a deep concern for parents, educators, pastors, youth ministers, peers, and the community in general. Middle schoolers experience rapid growth, and their bodies go through hormonal changes during their three years of middle school. The literature indicates that these changes greatly affect the way in which they relate to one another, their families, their teachers, and their church. When Dr. Dorsey speaks of schools, parents, society, and church being deeply concerned about the middle school students, he is talking about the need for a village to provide youth with a supportive and nurturing foundation. Thomas J. Brown, executive director of Brown and Associates: Educational Consultants, writes in his book, *Ten Commandments for Success in Teaching*: “The responsibility for producing an educated citizenry is too important to be left to educators. Education is everybody’s business.”¹¹

Linda Perlstein, a former Washington Post staff writer, author of the Educated Reporter blog and coach to educational journalists, tracks an entire class of middle school students through a series of life events in her book, *Not Much Just Chillin’: The Hidden Lives of Middle Schoolers*. As she follows these students through their daily lives, she reports not only their words but the words of their parents and teachers as they relate to them. Throughout the book, she inserts her own narrative about each student, how the student’s life has been formed and lived within the school atmosphere, and the hopes for the future the students have expressed. In

¹⁰ Bernard Dorsey, email to author, June 15, 2018.

¹¹ Thomas J. Brown, *Ten Commandments for Success in Teaching* (New York: Brown and Associates, 1998), 57.

one section, Ms. Perlstein quotes a middle school principal, Ms. Thomas, whose relationship with her students is described throughout the book.

“The great thing about kids this age,” says Ms. Thomas, who taught social studies in high school for eight years and middle school for ten, “is that they’re not jaded. They’ll try different ways of looking at problems, and they can be very creative and out of the box. When I taught high school, the kids were just basically walking into the classroom and waiting for me to teach. Whereas these kids can be much more active learners—if they’re tapped by the right teachers and right materials.”¹²

Throughout her book, Ms. Perlstein quotes many noted personalities in the educational and psychological fields. At one point, she refers to the words of Haim Ginott, the child psychologist who wrote the best-selling book *Between Parent and Child* in 1965. Dr. Ginott died in 1973, but his books and professional articles continue to be in great demand. Ms. Perlstein quotes Dr. Ginott: “The best middle school teachers set high expectations and stick with them. They point out the good things a student does—more than—the bad ones.”¹³ I concur with Dr. Ginott’s opinion that there are two parts to consider when praising or criticizing a student. The first part is what is actually said to the student, and the second part is what the student hears, accepts, and allows to alter their behavior. Such praise or criticism is certainly something to be considered when dealing with a student whose emotional stability can change so quickly.

Ms. Perlstein calls this emotional stability, or lack thereof, “going through the most radical changes since infancy.”¹⁴ The change of which she speaks is what makes these students so interesting in one moment and so frustrating in the next. Ms. Perlstein continues:

Suddenly they go from striving for *As* to barely passing, from fretting about cooties to obsessing for hours about crushes. Former chatterboxes answer in monosyllables; freethinkers mimic everything from clothes to opinions. Their bodies and psyches morph through the most radical change since infancy. They are

¹² Linda Perlstein, *Not Much Just Chillin’: The Hidden Lives of Middle Schoolers* (Ballantine Books, The Random House Publishing Group, New York, NY, 2003), Back Cover.

¹³ Perlstein, *Not Much Just Chillin’*, 117.

¹⁴ Perlstein, *Not Much Just Chillin’*, Back Cover.

kids in the middle school years, the age every adult remembers well enough to dread.¹⁵

Richard Lavoie worked for years as a teacher and then served as headmaster for a residential school for over thirty years. Today Mr. Lavoie is a lecturer and consultant to parents, teachers, and professionals. In his book, *Motivational Breakthrough: Six Secrets to Turning on the Turned-Out Child*, Mr. Lavoie lists ten strategies for successfully teaching. These strategies coincide with meeting the educational and emotional needs of middle school students as described in the literature.

1. Teach enthusiastically.
2. Focus on strength—a faith-based approach recognizes and celebrates the talents, interests, competencies, and affinities of each student.
3. Recognize, reinforce, and celebrate success, effort, and progress.
4. Encourage and promote creativity.
5. Promote cooperation—not competition—within the classroom.
6. Establish long term and short term goals for and with the students.
7. Whenever possible, provide the students with opportunities to make decisions and choices.
8. Demonstrate that you genuinely care about your students and their progress.
9. Promote peer relationships.
10. Provide the opportunity for every child to realize success.¹⁶

The literature shows that there is an opportunity to accomplish most of these strategies within the classroom if there is genuine respect between students and teacher. It seems there are two keys to making the ten strategies work—numbers 1 and 5. An enthusiastic teacher can enlighten even the dullest of students. Promoting cooperation within the classroom can make the class a successful team. The dream I bring to this research is to develop an educational tool that brings students into a new understanding of their faith and how to live it.

¹⁵ Perlstein, *Not Much, Just Chillin'*, 115.

¹⁶ Lavoie, *The Motivational Breakthrough*, 251–252.

Philanthropy and the “Kid Market”

In 2002, Cindy Sesler Ballard, executive director of the Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth, published a report entitled, *Best Practices in Youth Philanthropy*, written by Pam Garza and Pam Stevens. It was the combined report of the 1999 White House Conference on Philanthropy. The first paragraph of the report reads:

Imagine a society that values young people for their present worth, not their future value. Envision communities where young people routinely make and inform decisions of consequence—to neighborhoods, to schools, to the environment, that addresses issues such as race and violence—in short, decisions in aid of the greater good. This vision is a reality, but it exists in pockets of opportunities available for miniscule numbers of youth. It is not nearly enough. It is not the norm . . . but it could be.¹⁷

The subject of youth philanthropy has gained a great deal of attention since the White House Conference in 1999. Several books have been written specifically on this subject of youth philanthropy. *Money Well Spent: A Strategic Plan for Smart Philanthropy* by Paul Brest and Hal Harvey has become a classic in the field. In their book, they explore the effective components of a strategy designed for philanthropic giving. The book also outlines some of the tools needed to accomplish philanthropy. Included in those tools are both education and advocacy. Peter Frumkin outlines a detailed plan to help donors guide their giving. In his book, *Strategic Giving: The Art and Science of Philanthropy*, he also explores the science and logic behind contemporary philanthropy.

One book that immediately engages youth is John Wood’s *Leaving Microsoft to Change the World*. Every middle school student knows Microsoft and their products. The story of Mr. Wood visiting a village in Nepal and becoming obsessed with a desire to provide resources and schooling to the children of the village captivates the imagination of students. Discussing Mr.

¹⁷ Pam Garza and Pam Stevens, *Best Practices in Youth Philanthropy* (Indianapolis, IN: National Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth, 2002), 2–3.

Wood's motivation in giving up a lucrative job and traveling half way around the world to help people he has never met moves youth and adults to study and understand such motivation as the joy of philanthropy.

The follow up conferences, sponsored by the Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth and held in key locations throughout the United States continue to inspire leaders of youth to promote youth philanthropy. The report reads:

What distinguishes youth philanthropy from other forms of charitable activity is that young people participate at a decision-making level—identifying community priorities, making grant decisions. But youth philanthropy is about more than giving away money. It integrates philanthropic tradition and values with the principles of youth development—young people capably and actively involved in their own social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development. . . . Youth philanthropy programs provide authentic opportunities for young people to develop skills and knowledge that will make them better students and citizens in the present and increase the chances that they will continue to play active roles in the community in the future.¹⁸

Many sources in literature confirm that philanthropy is a key element in inspiring youth to be actively involved in their communities. A community in our context means not only geographic communities, but also, and more importantly, church and youth communities. These middle school students are amazingly aware of human need, both from their own families and from their observation of the world around them. For instance, having a friend at school who is too heavy to play on the playground during recess because of diabetes inspired a student to adopt the Children's Diabetes Foundation as his philanthropy partner. A student whose grandmother had breast cancer inspired him to make the National Breast Cancer Foundation a philanthropy partner. When there is a cause or purpose that touches their hearts or lives, middle school students can be passionate about their philanthropic work.

¹⁸ Gaza and Stevens, *Best Practices*, 3.

The youth of today are the subjects of major advertising campaigns. The business world realizes that children and youth spend millions of dollars on a variety of commodities every year. Richard Lavoie dubs this kind of advertising as geared toward the *Kid Market*. He claims, in his book, *The Motivational Breakthrough*, that this market has increased and expanded significantly in recent years in response to several sociological phenomena that have occurred in our society. These cultural changes have resulted in a young generation with significant monies to spend.”¹⁹

According to his research the slogan, *Kids Just Want to Have Fun*, although seemingly a harmless observation of the desire of youth, was actually coined by market researches as they attempted to reach a younger generation. Marketers have been deliberate in understanding the meaning of fun for youth. They have geared their advertising campaigns toward the different populations of youth and their definitions of fun.

Marketers define *fun* as “having your emotional needs met and satisfied.” For a gregarious child, fun is being with his posse. For an autonomous child, fun means working alone on a project. Fun is working for an award in the mind of a child driven by achievement. There are many kinds of fun, and the definition of *fun* is different for each child. Basically, if a child’s emotional needs are being met, he is having fun. If his basic needs are thwarted, he is not having fun. It is as simple, and as complex, as that.²⁰

The marketers have divided the middle school population into several identifiable groups. What researchers said about fun could also be applied to youth involvement in the community and the ways they might choose to pursue the funding of a philanthropic project. One of the challenges of this age group, according to the literature under my earlier section, the Nature of Middle School Students, is that their personalities can change quickly, depending on many events taking place in their lives at the same time. This causes me to believe that a middle school student might be gregarious at one moment and desire to work alone the

¹⁹ Lavoie, *The Motivational Breakthrough*, 344.

²⁰ Lavoie, *The Motivational Breakthrough*, 346.

next. One of the characteristics of this age group is that nothing is permanent. Everything is in the process of change.

I would want to draw a distinction between the marketers' word *fun* and the church's understanding of fun. Philanthropic giving, in our context, is geared to be fun as well as emotionally enjoyable and satisfying. Raising money for a project by hosting a car wash, a bake sale, or participating in a community unity walk is fun. Using the money earned by those activities, selecting a project for which a student has a passion, and presenting the money they have had fun earning gives them emotional and enjoyable satisfaction. Their emotional needs are met on two levels—having fun and enjoying the satisfaction of a meaningful project completed. I believe the White House conference affirmed such a philanthropic reality in reporting, “What distinguishes youth philanthropy from other forms of charitable activity is that young people participate at a decision-making level—identifying community priorities . . .”²¹

Culture, Compassion and Mentoring

In their book, *Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders*, the authors define culture in a way I believe the church should adopt. Their definition is: “Culture involves far more than ethnic or racial differences. Culture is the set of practices and beliefs that is shared by members of a particular group that distinguishes one group from others.”²²

Our students and mentors emerge from a variety of cultures. By acknowledging the concept of culture itself, we bring awareness to cultural dynamics within the relationships between students and the content, students and peers, students and teachers, students and mentors, and students and community relationships. Through reflection upon the experience of

²¹ Garza and Stevens, *Best Practices*, 4.

²² Randall B. Lindsey, Kikanza Nuri Robins, and Raymond D. Terrell, *Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin – A SAGE Company, 2009), 94.

both culture and education, it is my goal for students and teachers to emerge with a deeper understanding of Jesus, each other, and themselves.

Our middle school students attend schools where, on many occasions, the school culture is one of bullying and harshness. Hearing stories of bullying are disturbing to adults as well as youth. And it always makes one wonder about how things could be different. Martin L. Krovetz addresses this situation in his book, *Fostering Resilience*, when he asks: “What would a school be like whose culture is centered on caring?”²³ He answers that question by quoting from a book written by educational colleagues Nan Henderson and Mike M. Milstein. They answer Krovetz’s question with five points:

1. Members have a sense of belonging.
2. Cooperation is promoted.
3. Celebrations of successes are practiced.
4. Leaders spend lots of positive time with members.
5. Resources are obtained with a minimum of effort.²⁴

Dr. Krovetz’s question sparks the imagination of any teacher or education administrator almost as much as teachers within the church. Imagining a school where random acts of kindness were routine and where compassionate caring, generated from faculty, students, administration and community, set the school’s landscape seems almost a utopian vision. All five of Henderson and Milstein’s points give positive guidance and reinforcement to the type of classes churches desire. Andrea S. Cohen, Leah Green, and Susan Partnow touch upon the ingredients for such a school when they speak of compassionate listening. They write:

Compassionate listening is a practice that integrates cognitive awareness with the wisdom of the heart. It fosters a quality of listening that helps create a safe setting

²³ Martin L. Krovetz, *Fostering Resilience: Expecting All Students to Use Their Minds and Hearts Well* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2008), 66.

²⁴ Krovetz, *Fostering Resilience*, 67.

for people to express themselves honestly and fully in search of their deepest truth.²⁵

When training mentors and junior mentors, it is imperative that they understand the importance of listening wisely and attentively to the students. In so doing, students will open their hearts to the mentors and be receptive to new ideas as they are shared. Genuine interest in the practice of such compassionate listening is mandatory for anyone serving as a mentor. Cohen, Green, and Partnow conclude by saying: “We believe that by opening and changing our hearts, we can contribute to changing the world—one person at a time.”²⁶

I believe this statement reflects the goal of the church and certainly the goal of every teacher who understands the importance of their role in the lives of middle school students. The church wants our students to feel they can change the world. And that change will be accomplished through their faith and through their work, one act and one person at a time.

Developing an Educational Tool to Meet the Needs of Today’s Middle School Population

In the 1950s and 1960s, the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. held annual conferences throughout the United States. These meetings were training sessions for professional religious educators of all denominations. They were not only well attended but were extremely helpful to those of us involved in the ministry of education within the church. In the *Guide for Curriculum*, a book published in 1955 and still current today, the authors define curriculum as a means to an end. They write:

It has been said several times that the curriculum is a means and not an end, but let us underscore that fact. Curriculum materials take on the qualities of a tool—something to be used in a process or in furthering objectives. The curriculum cannot therefore be thought of as a body of subject matter to be mastered by the

²⁵ Andrea S. Cohen, Leah Green, and Susan Partnow, *Practicing the Art of Compassionate Listening* (The Compassionate Listening Project, 2007), 10.

²⁶ Cohen, Green, and Partnow, *Practicing the Art*, 12, 35.

pupil. . . the purpose of the curriculum is to effect change, to foster growth, and to bring about commitment.²⁷

In preparing to write church-related content, I turned first to the “Affirmation of Faith” from the Preamble of the Design for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ.) This document was written and adopted at the General Assembly held in Portland, Oregon, in 1969. It is not a creed, nor is it intended to be creedal in any way, but it is as close as the Disciples have ever come to putting pen to paper in defining their identity and beliefs.²⁸

The essence of the Affirmation, the very core of the church’s belief, is that we are a community formed around the Communion Table, a Table which is open to everyone. The invitation to sit at the Table comes directly from Jesus as He shares the bread and wine, symbolic of His body and blood. The open nature of the Table defines our identity as a people and is the radical expression of the church’s hospitality to the world. That is a key lesson for young Christians to learn and practice.

The late Colbert S. Cartwright, a career minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and coeditor of *Chalice Worship* and *Chalice Hymnal Worship Leader’s Companion*, defines the Disciples in his book, *People of the Chalice*. He wrote:

. . . church bodies usually fit into one of two broad categories. One kind of church thinks in exclusive terms, seeing itself as the only true and faithful followers of Christ. It stands separate and apart from all other professing Christians.

. . . The other kind of church regards itself in inclusive terms, as being an integral part of Christ’s one church manifesting itself in manifold ways. These folk feel a close kinship with all church bodies through their common fellowship with Christ.

. . . The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is among those inclusive church bodies which sense their oneness with all Christians in every time and place. This

²⁷ Special Committee on the Curriculum Guide, *A Guide for Curriculum in Christian Education* (Chicago, IL: The National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., 1955), 26–27.

²⁸ See Appendix A for full content of this affirmation.

is symbolized for me in the openness of the Lord's Table within the Disciples' church, which the followers of Christ are invited to share together with him.²⁹

In today's world, our youth are exposed to a variety of religious beliefs other than the Protestant Christian faith through school, sports, theater, and community activities. Within walking distance of our church campus are two Jewish temples, one Reformed and one Conservation, a Universalist-Unitarian church, a Syrian Orthodox church, a Roman Catholic church, a Mormon congregation, a Christian Science church, a Church of Religious Science, as well as United Methodist, Presbyterian, and Episcopalian churches. I feel it is important for our youth to be able to identify the basic beliefs of their own church so that, when they are in religious discussions with their friends, they can feel confident about representing their faith correctly.

Dr. Ronald Osborn, former professor of Church History at Claremont School of Theology, coined a five-point explanation of how members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) view their theology and their faith.³⁰ He calls it *The Disciple Mind*.³¹ His definition is, in my opinion, a classic understanding of our people. This mind-set is sometimes difficult for our students to grasp, but nevertheless, I feel that by introducing them to now they will grow in their understanding of a Disciple mind as they mature. Dr. Osborn wrote:

Emphasizing faith with understanding, the Disciples mind puts the highest premium on rationality and faithfulness in action. This faith is biblically based, but it is understood in the light of scripture. While the Disciples' mind is biblical, it is more than that. It is reasonable: it thinks the Bible through with common sense. It is empirical: it reads the Bible in light of the knowledge that comes through the sciences. It is pragmatic: it tests in action the teachings of scripture and all

²⁹ Colbert S. Cartwright, *People of the Chalice* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1987), 13.

³⁰ Ronald Osborn, *The Faith We Affirm: Basic Beliefs of Disciples of Christ* (St. Louis, MO: The Bethany Press, 1979), 11–14.

³¹ Osborn, *The Faith We Affirm*, 15.

religious notions. . . . It is ecumenical: the Disciples' mind seeks biblical understanding in light of the common mind of the whole church.³²

Such theological writing is difficult for lay adults to understand, let alone middle schoolers. However, I do know that students engage in theological discussions on their own level of understanding. I once had a third grader tell me that he and his friend regularly discussed reincarnation during recess. When I quizzed him about the meaning of the term, I was surprised at the accuracy with which he responded. While middle schoolers may not totally understand Dr. Osborn's *Disciple Mind*, I'm sure they will grasp enough to form a base upon which to build further faith. For me, the most important thing for them to learn is that we are an open congregation and welcome anyone who comes through the door to the Table.

The Rev. Mr. Kyle Idleman, pastor of Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky, addresses this openness in his book, *Not A Fan*:

Jesus begins his call to follow him with these two words, "If anyone. . . anyone is a significant word because it makes it clear whom he is inviting. He is inviting anyone. Anyone. Anyone is an all-inclusive word. Anyone means everyone. Jesus doesn't begin with a list of prequalifications. His invitation to follow is addressed to Anyone."³³

One of the tasks of a teacher of middle schoolers is to communicate the church's hospitality by welcoming anyone. This is a concept difficult for many adults to accept so it is understandable why students could have the same difficulty. Nevertheless, we must communicate the truth that Jesus invites anyone, and it is the church's responsibility to extend Jesus' invitation.

Jeff Keuss, professor of Christian Ministry, Theology, and Culture at Seattle Pacific University, in his book *BLUR: A New Paradigm for Understanding Youth Culture*, advises those who teach this age students:

³² Osborn, *The Faith We Affirm*, 11–14.

³³ Kyle Idleman, *Not a Fan* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 117.

This means churches and ministries working with teenagers need to shift how they approach faith formation for teens away from models that desire teenagers to get to some sense of certainty in their faith at the expense of searching, probing question and—even at times—doubting.³⁴

As a teacher, I realize that nothing is absolute for these students. The most interesting and persuasive lesson regarding Jesus can be totally questioned the next day by a peer espousing the truths of Buddhism or the tenants of atheism. One of the central elements of the class is to allow the students to have the freedom to discuss their questions and doubts with their mentors and each other.

Keuss also addresses the mobility of youth in this modern age. More than any other time in history, youth have a wide gamut of mobility. Students now have the opportunity to travel throughout the United States and foreign countries as part of their school activities. Many families travel internationally, and youth are exposed to cultures, religions, and ways of life never afforded to many former generations. Virtual mobility is also something many students experience through the rapidly changing technical world in which they live.

Keuss refers to this mobility as sacred, meaning that youth today can explore many different philosophies, religions, and beliefs, all within their daily family and school life. This is especially true in a geographical area, such as Studio City and greater Los Angeles, where so many cultures and religions live in the same communities. Addressing this reality, Keuss wrote:

As today's young people become more and more sacredly mobile and express a willingness to experience new frontiers of cultures where they can find God in new and powerful ways, the church and youth ministry in general will need to adopt a "gather to scatter" model of training, encouragement, and commissioning, rather than a settling and staying model.³⁵

³⁴ Jeff Keuss, *BLUE: A New Paradigm for Understanding Youth Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 153.

³⁵ Keuss, *BLUE*, 102.

I believe Keuss' observation is valid. Youth today, especially middle school students, not only respond to times of talking, exploring, and sharing with their peers and mentors, but they also respond to the mobility provided them and having first-hand experiences with other cultures and religious groups. I believe this opens an entirely new way of teaching that allows students to learn, ask questions, doubt, struggle, and eventually make a decision about their beliefs.

Key to this study is Jesus and His teachings. His life and teachings should be a central part of everything within the church. The teacher's task is to make these teachings fun, timely, relevant, and ideally life changing. Dr. James C. Wilhoit, professor of Christian Formation and Ministry at Wheaton College and his colleague Dr. Leland Ryken, Wheaton's professor emeritus of English, give insight into the role of story-telling and the importance of playacting in knowing and understanding Jesus and the Bible. In their book, *Effective Bible Teaching*, they write:

One of the most universal human impulses can be summed up in the four words, "tell me a story." Not a day goes by without our telling and listening to "what happened," and explaining what happened is telling a story. The Bible implicitly obeys this human longing for narrative or story. In fact, narrative is the dominant form of writing in the Bible as a whole.

One can't help but connect middle schoolers' love of "play" with the opportunity of the Bible itself as a story; as a result of an effective educational curriculum, one hopes students can move from playacting to action. From the mystical to the real. From performance in the classroom to practice in community. . . . Teachers are the single most important ingredient in any educational program. . . . ultimately it is the teacher who opens the door to high-quality instruction.³⁶

As Wilhoit and Ryken point out, the Bible is filled with wonderful stories that educate, inspire, motivate, and entertain. Many of these stories are perfect for educational role-playing. Taking one of Jesus' parables and translating it into our contemporary world is a major learning experience for this age group. The literature affirms that the teacher is key, not only to the

³⁶ James C. Wilhoit and Leland Ryken, *Effective Bible Teaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2012), 151, 29.

educational goal, but in creating an atmosphere for learning by designing an interesting, enjoyable, informative, and inspirational class.

Establishing an Atmosphere for Learning

Research has demonstrated that deeper exploration and creative learning takes place when an atmosphere for learning is created by the teacher. Dr. Marianne Schneider Corey, a licensed marriage and family counselor, and Dr. Gerald Corey, professor emeritus of Human Services at California State University at Fullerton, speak of creating a welcoming and respectful atmosphere in their book, *Groups: Process and Practice*. They list five goals that help establish an atmosphere for learning.

I have modified those goals for this project:

1. Create an atmosphere of trust for students, student peers, mentors, and junior mentors.
2. Create interesting presentations of the subject matter to captivate the students' imagination and stimulate class participation.
3. Prepare every student to write their own mission statement and their own confession of faith.
4. Instill within each student a respect for their own individuality as well as the individuality of every other student.
5. Create an environment of enjoyment and fun.³⁷

The literature concludes that the teacher, as the center of the class, is ultimately responsible for the creation of an atmosphere in which creative learning can take place. Lavoie, in the conclusion of his book, *The Motivational Breakthrough*, writes of this learning environment from another point of view. He explains how advertisers and marketers have developed a technique to study children and youth and therefore determine and target their likes and dislikes. The knowledge they learn in these studies can easily translate to how teachers can

³⁷ Marianne Schneider Corey and Gerald Corey, *Groups: Process and Practice* (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1997), 95.

more effectively reach their students. What we learn from marketers can be extremely helpful in evaluating our own marketing and motivational approaches.

Lavoie has taken the six questions marketers ask themselves in evaluating the advertisement of a product and written them in the context of evaluating our educational process and atmosphere. I consider some of his main points vital to teaching. He calls them the formula for success:

1. Attention: Do my introductions and the initial minutes of my classes capture the student's attention?
2. Comprehension: Are my instructions and directions stated clearly and thoroughly?
3. Involvement/engagement: Do I use strategies that ensure that all students are actively engaged in class related tasks?
4. Yield: Do my students enjoy my class?
5. Action: Does my teaching inspire students to learn more about different subject areas?
6. Reaction and communication: Occasionally poll or survey your students to secure information about their opinions or the format and progress of the class.³⁸

From the review of the literature, it is clear that there is no curriculum presently available that meets the needs of this particular population of youth. The literature indicates that three things are necessary for adequate Christian education to take place in the church today: 1) a teacher who loves God and sees God's truth and grace exhibited through Jesus the Christ, 2) a teacher who is passionate about their students and takes the time to know each one individually, and 3) a teacher who puts that passion into action by creating the most interesting, inspiring, and motivating learning experience possible. These three qualities, which underline good education within the church, run throughout the literature reviewed.

³⁸ Lavoie, *The Motivational Breakthrough*, 354–355.

Conclusion to the Review of Literature

The middle school students of today are bright, curious, and moved by the needs of others. They can also be emotional and unpredictable. The literature also indicates that this population is open to new ideas and expanded concepts of God and the universe. Since I could find no curriculum that took all this information into account, I designed a curriculum that addresses the crucial issues the literature raised. In designing this curriculum, I targeted primarily the youth of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) who would be making their confessions of faith and being baptized in the years to come. I also designed it so that, with some minor changes, it can be used by other denominations.

CHAPTER THREE

THE NEED FOR A NEW CURRICULUM

My Starting Motivation

After teaching and evaluating the class for middle school students preparing to make their confessions of faith and be baptized, I realized that the curriculum we were using did not speak the language of students growing up in one of the largest cities in the world. Neither did it meet their intellectual, emotional, and spiritual needs. The curriculum we had been using seemed to target a population who had not been exposed to a variety of religious faiths and cultures or to the rapid pace of a large city.

After talking with the middle school students from our congregation (and their friends) and identifying subjects that were not being taught in the curriculum we were using, I concluded that a new curriculum was needed. I felt that it should incorporate the traditional information of a Discipleship Class, including Jesus, the Bible, the Church, mission, etc., but that it should also include an emphasis on philanthropy and the students' involvement in their communities.

The literature supported my belief that it was necessary to create a curriculum which encouraged open discussion, questioning, and disagreement without judgment. A curriculum can create this atmosphere through small groups, projects, and homework. It can also be created by teaching subjects that have relevancy to the students. The literature also encouraged the use of mentors in the learning process. Mentors can expand the effectiveness of teaching and, by sharing their own faith journey, can greatly increase the knowledge gained by the students.

After I started my research and made the decision to write a new middle school curriculum, I began engaging our middle school students in further conversation. I inquired about their schools, interests, goals for the future, and their plans for further education. I also

spoke with them regarding their attitudes towards involvement in the church. I became more regular in attending school, theater, musical, and athletic events in which our students were involved. As these conversations continued and I spent more time sitting with their parents at these events, I began to gain clearer insight into the complex nature of these students. I also felt more compelled to develop a meaningful curriculum that would be of interest to them and, at the same time, meet their needs.

The review of literature validated what I was learning from my firsthand relationships with our middle school students. It also validated what I was learning from their families and professional educators. Middle school students are often emotionally volatile during times of rapid growth. Relationships with adults are not always easy, and they are more prone to confide in their peers than anyone else. They are usually surrounded by close friends, a group that often includes youth of different races, cultures, and religious backgrounds.

I wanted to inspire these students to accept Jesus as their friend and companion and be baptized. My underlying desire was to create a culture in which youth would continue to grow, adopt Christian ideals, and remain active in the life of the church. I also wanted to challenge them to be other-centered and learn the importance of giving. I decided, as a result of the literature, that philanthropy was a challenging way to accomplish that goal. The literature substantiated that philanthropy appealed to this age group, especially if they controlled how they raised their money and to what cause it was given. I found that philanthropy is a creative and exciting way of teaching the Biblical concept of stewardship and establishing their inner concern for others.

As I began developing this curriculum, I again realized that it had to reach the students on all levels. It had to become a part of their core values, values that will remain with them the rest

of their lives. In order to influence these core values, I realized that the students needed to become totally immersed within the class and the subject material. The literature established that students needed to feel that their thoughts and feelings were important in how the curriculum was taught. As Seymour B. Sarason said:

When one has no stake in the way things are, when one's needs or opinions are provided no forum, when one sees oneself as the object of unilateral actions, it takes no particular wisdom to suggest that one would rather be elsewhere.³⁹

Having ownership of an experience, having what you say heard and respected, and feeling involved in a process does not necessarily mean agreement with the contents. What it means, for the student, is being given permission to raise questions and challenge the teacher and any teachings regarding faith in a safe, non-threatening, and non-judgmental atmosphere. Owning the experience means being able to engage in serious dialogue without judgment from peers or adults. This ownership is part of meeting their emotional and intellectual needs and is another reason why the new curriculum was necessary.

As a result of the information gathered from the literature, I designed one of the class sessions to include a discussion of mission statements. If students feel that they are in the process of owning their own identity, I believe an exercise in articulating a personal mission statement would be helpful. Once they are able to express, in a written mission statement, exactly who they are or who they want to be, then I believe it is easier for them to articulate their own confession of faith in Jesus.

The confession of faith used in most Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregations is somewhat universal. It is also short and reads: "Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son

³⁹ Seymour B. Sarason, *The Predictable Failure of Educational Reform* (San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass Publishers, 1990), 83.

of the living God and do you take Him as your Lord and Savior?”⁴⁰ Over the years, I have personalized that traditional confession by adding: “. . . as your friend, and do you commit your life to living Jesus’ gospel of unconditional love?” After participating in the class, I believe that most students will be ready to make that confession and understand what it means for their future. The importance of incorporating a personal mission statement as part of a confession of faith is simply to give the students something that will transcend the changes that naturally occur in life. The mission statement and the confession of faith, as a two-pronged support tool, will hopefully help keep them actively involved in the Christian community and in living a Christian life.

Understanding the Culture

The need to understand the culture is paramount in developing a curriculum. Part of what the curriculum tries to accomplish is to understand and appreciate the culture of our youth. In our context, a normal class could have a variety of ethnic groups, some speaking different languages. These could be children from first generation immigrant families as well as children from families whose ancestors were early settlers in the United States. There will be a mixture of students attending public schools, private schools, religious schools, and charter schools as well as students being home schooled. There may be children from families on welfare, moderate incomes, and children whose parents are executives in some of the largest industries in the world.

The mentors will also come from a variety of cultural backgrounds, which should be shared with one another and with their students. Through reflection upon the experience of both

⁴⁰ This confession of faith has been used in the First Christian Church of North Hollywood since 1950 per church historian records. While in use by many churches in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), it has not been adopted as an official part of the church’s faith statements.

culture and education, it is my hope that students and mentors alike will emerge with a deeper understanding of Jesus, each other, their world, and themselves.

Language and Culture Worldwide, LLC looks at culture from a broad perspective. We might think of our understanding of culture as that which we see when we look at an individual or group. That understanding is defined by things, such as food, dress, religious practices, music, language, and how people greet one another in public. Language & Culture Worldwide, LLC defines culture in the following way:

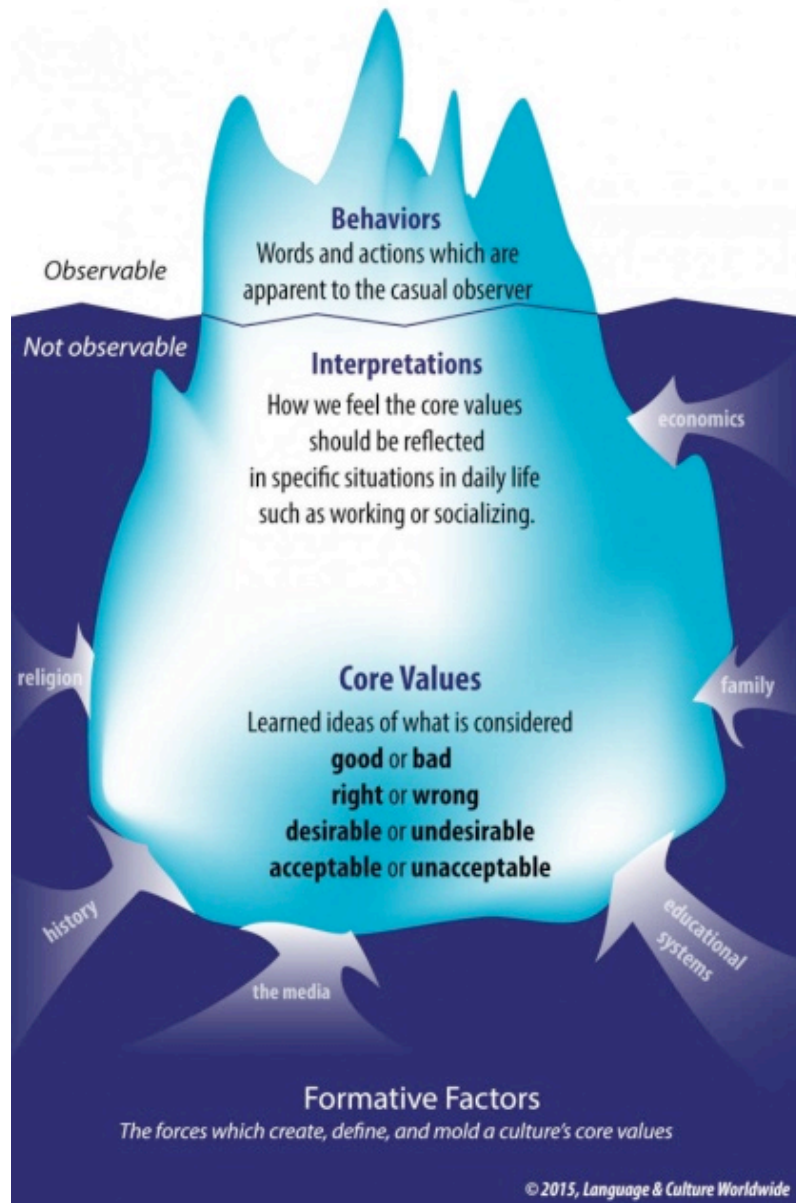
The reality, however, is that these are merely an external manifestation of the deeper and broader components of culture—the complex ideas and deeply-held preferences and priorities known as attitudes and values. . . . Deep below the “waterline” are a culture’s core values. These are primarily learned ideas of what is good, right, desirable, and acceptable—as well as what is bad, wrong, undesirable, and unacceptable. In many cases, different cultural groups share similar core values (such as “honesty,” or “respect,” or “family”) but these are often interpreted differently in different situations and incorporated in unique ways into our daily lives. Ultimately, our interpretations of our core values become visible to the (The Cultural Iceberg n.d.) way we act, the laws we enact, and the ways we communicate with each other.⁴¹

The goal of my curriculum is to reach below the waterline as illustrated in the cultural iceberg pyramid (see next page) and have a lasting effect on the students’ core values. Middle school students are open to new ideas.⁴² Their thinking is not polarized. They are influenced by their peers and by adults they love and respect. I hope to encourage our students in their love and respect of everyone connected with the class. Of course, the long-term goal would be to incorporate into those core values the teachings of Jesus and the desire to live a life of unconditional love.

⁴¹ “The Cultural Iceberg,” Language & Culture Worldwide, accessed September 10, 2018. <https://www.languageandculture.com/cultural-iceberg>.

⁴² “The Cultural Iceberg,” Language & Culture Worldwide, accessed September 15, 2018. <https://www.languageandculture.com/cultural-iceberg>.

The Cultural Pyramid from Language and Culture Worldwide: 2015⁴³



⁴³ “The Cultural Iceberg,” Language & Culture Worldwide, accessed October 08, 2018, <https://www.languageandculture.com/cultural-iceberg>.

CHAPTER FOUR

PART A: CURRICULUM AND METHODOLOGY

The Curriculum Design

In the light of the literature and the issues raised in Chapter Three, I designed the following curriculum for middle school students preparing to make their confession of faith and be baptized in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). In designing this curriculum, I created specifically for the middle school students from the First Christian Church of North Hollywood who were taking the annual Discipleship Class. For most of this student population, I am the only pastor they have ever known. Therefore, I felt it was my pastoral and personal responsibility to write a curriculum that would challenge them and give them an opportunity to accept Jesus and His teachings as a way of life. I also wanted them to have the opportunity to raise questions and seek answers in a safe, non-judgmental atmosphere.

The curriculum is divided into ten class sessions. In each session there are: a major emphasis, teaching objectives, key questions, learning activities, an overview, a guest speaker, and a homework assignment. Most of the class sessions have time dedicated to discussion and planning philanthropic projects.

Session One

The major emphasis of the first session is threefold: to become acquainted as students, mentors, and teacher; to present and discuss Jesus' Sermon on the Mount; and to introduce the idea of philanthropic projects. Each student receives a notebook with support information for the class. We introduce Jesus through reading the fifth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew and discussing the Beatitudes. The concept of stewardship is introduced by talking about philanthropy and how the class can be involved in activities helping other people and causes.

Session Two

The Bible as the Word of God and an introduction to the books of the Bible is the first part of the second session. We briefly review the history, the many authors, and historical events of the Bible with major emphasis on the four Gospels. We then study Jesus' concept of giving and share information as to how students can work together to help others through philanthropic projects.

Session Three

In the third class session, we discuss the meaning of mission statements and introduce the students to various organizations, such as schools, hospitals, and churches and how they articulate their missions. We ask the students to begin thinking about what they would include in their own personal mission statement. We discuss the relationship between a personal mission statement and a confession of faith so that students will understand this connection. We discuss the similarities and differences between the two.

Session Four

The subject of love as Jesus' greatest teaching is the main emphasis of the fourth class session. We explore Jesus' answer to the question regarding the greatest commandment, read and discuss Paul's I Corinthians 13, the Love Chapter, and talk with one another about turning the other cheek and loving one's enemies. Students and mentors spend some time during this session discussing bullying and how, in their opinions, they handle bullying. They also discuss how they believe Jesus would have handled bullies.

Session Five

The fifth session is devoted to a study of the Church. We look at the Day of Pentecost and how the church began and grew. As part of this session, we identify the churches in our immediate neighborhood. Part of our discussion includes some basic differences in religious

observances within these churches and where they can be found in the growth and development of the Church from the time of Pentecost.

Session Six

The rich history of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is the subject of the sixth session. We trace the development from the time the Campbell family came from Scotland and decided to break away from the Presbyterian Church through the formation of our denomination in 1969 to the present. We discuss how Christian unity, higher education, and mission highlight the history of our people.

Session Seven

The seventh session is taught as a continuation of the sixth session. We transition from history to theology and examine how that theology guides us into our spiritual practices. During this session, we have some in-depth discussions regarding making a confession of faith and being baptized. A main portion of this session is a discussion regarding the Table as an expression of hospitality.

Session Eight

Our congregation is ninety-four years old and has a fascinating history. This is a major part of the eighth class session. The students go on a tour of our campus, looking for memorial plaques identifying specific gifts and people. Following their tour, we discuss some of those people and their contribution to the congregation. Throughout the last forty years, the campus has been used for location shots in television and movies. These are part of the local heritage taught during this session.

During this session, we talk about the organization of our congregation. The church is congregationally run, and youth who have made their confession of faith and been baptized

automatically become church members. They can then serve on committees, counsels, and vote at congregational meetings.

Session Nine

The ninth session is entitled “God’s Law and Society’s Law” and begins by examining the laws of the Bible, including the Ten Commandments and Jesus’ interpretation of the two greatest commandments. We then move from biblical laws to the laws of society and discuss our obligation to obey those laws. Our guest speaker is an undercover police officer who grew up in our church and was baptized following his confession of faith. He relates to the students how a police officer can also be a practicing Christian, putting his faith into action while on the job.

Session Ten

The tenth and final session of the class is about living as a Christian in a non-Christian world. In this session, we examine beliefs held by the students’ friends. These friends might be Roman Catholic, Jewish, Mormon, Islam, Buddhist, or any number of Protestant denominations. The intent of the session is to lift up the belief in One God worshipped by many different people of many different cultures and religions. The goal is for students to be knowledgeable about their church and faith and be able to articulate their beliefs when others are interested in it.

Methodology

Using Interviews

The interviews I held with Ms. Sheri Werner were helpful in the design of the curriculum. As a career teacher and founding principal of The City School, her suggestions were invaluable. Each class session was designed with a variety of activity and movement. Both Ms. Werner and Ms. Kathleen Murvin shared that, from their experience, this age group does not like

to just sit and listen. I therefore include group discussions, mentor involvement, a time of questions and answers with guest speakers, and refreshment breaks throughout each session.

Presenting a Challenge

In the first session, I give the students a challenge. I tell them I am going to teach them a college level course that would take their most mature behavior and attention to comprehend. Then I tell them they are one of the most amazing groups of students ever assembled, that each of them is brilliant and that we are going to have a good time together. When I actually taught this curriculum, laughter erupted at my comment but, from that moment on, the students gave me their undivided attention and respect.

Mentors as Key Participants

The use of mentors was a recurring subject in the literature. Mentor participation in the class is extremely helpful. Their role is to provide another positive influence in the student's life and to be prepared to share their own faith journey with the students. I personally invite the mentors to be part of the class, and I pair the students with their mentors. The goal is to have student-mentor relationships that will go beyond the class and continue to be enjoyable and rewarding to both student and mentor. We encourage mentors to observe their student's birthdays, school activities, and to become as active in the student's life as possible.

There are some vital qualifications for adult mentors. In our context, mentors are members of the congregation who have demonstrated a commitment to their faith and who also love children and youth. They need to enjoy being with this age group and serving as a role model. While mentors are assigned to specific students, they are also expected to be available to any student in the class, and to the class as a whole, in sharing ideas and leading discussion. After the formal class has concluded, the students participate in fundraising for various

philanthropic causes they have chosen. Mentors are important assets in assisting students in these activities.

I also incorporated four junior mentors into the class. These are high school students who have made their confessions of faith and been baptized. When teaching this curriculum, I looked for high school students who demonstrated a viable Christian faith, a loyalty to the church, and who were willing to spend ten weeks mentoring middle school students. Junior mentors must also be willing to help the class in their philanthropic projects.

Orientation

There are six general questions to discuss with the mentors and junior mentors prior to the start of class. These are orientation questions that prepare everyone for the class experience.

1. Do we have a complete understanding of the general goals and learning outcome we have set for the students?
2. Are the student notebooks and name badges organized and ready for distribution on the first day of class?
3. Do we have a clear understanding of how we will engage the students and stimulate their interest as the class begins and continues?
4. Are we committed to observing the activities of each session objectively and spending time following each class session to evaluate the day's activities?
5. Will we check with parents regarding any variation in the student's schedule and if make-up sessions are necessary, what times are available?
6. Are we committed to making the class interesting, stimulating, and fun?⁴⁴

The Role of Philanthropy

Eight out of ten class sessions have a section on the philanthropic projects. Students are encouraged to identify a cause for which they feel great passion and plan a project to specifically support that cause or organization. By the end of our ten-week class, we had identified several projects that were meaningful to the students. Among those considered by our class were: the Interfaith Food Pantry; the Tennyson Center for Abused Children in Denver, Colorado;

⁴⁴Marianne Schneider Corey and Gerald Corey, *Groups: Process and Practice* (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1997), 108.

Operation Christmas Child; Actors and Others for Animals; Huntington's Disease; Children's Hospital; and a variety of cancer organizations. The students and their mentors work together in planning how to raise money to contribute to these non-profit causes.

We had one student design and sponsor an all church game night, which raised money for Week of Compassion. This is the social service relief arm of the Disciples of Christ. They respond to both natural and manmade disasters and coordinate relief assistance to those affected worldwide. Another student organized a talent show, which benefited the USO. A third student became part of a community project collecting backpacks and school supplies for financially challenged students who would otherwise not have had adequate supplies when school began.

PART B: THE SURVEYS

Four months after the conclusion of our class, I developed surveys to test the effectiveness of the ten-week Discipleship Class. I took the questions I wanted to ask each group to Ms. Werner who assisted me in putting the questions into an appropriate educational and measurable form. Four individual surveys were created to evaluate the class from four points of view: the students, their parents, their mentors, and their junior mentors. Each survey offered opportunities to judge class effectiveness from various points of view. Surveys offered several multiple-choice questions with five potential answers: Always, Usually, Sometimes, Rarely, and Never. There were also three or four specific essay type questions on each survey.

The total population surveyed consisted of forty-three people. The surveys were personally distributed to the target population with instructions to submit them anonymously in order to encourage honesty in evaluating the class. I disseminated thirteen surveys to students, thirteen to parents, thirteen to mentors, and four to junior mentors. I analyzed the data collected,

created charts and visualizations, and drew conclusions. On the following pages are the surveys for all four groups.

PART C: RESULTS OF SURVEYS

From conversations with both Ms. Werner and Ms. Murvin, I concluded that I would be fortunate to receive a fourth to a third of the surveys returned in a timely manner. However, I received a quick response. Forty-two of the forty-three surveys were returned to me within ten days. The last survey was returned, with extensive essay answers, two weeks after the surveys were disseminated.

One hundred percent of the parents said their child enjoyed the class, and eleven out of thirteen parents felt the subjects of the class were always relevant to their child. Two parents responded that the subjects were usually relevant. One hundred percent of the mentors said they would recommend serving as a mentor to their friends, and eleven mentors were willing to serve again the next year. Two mentors were not willing, one because of a pending move out of state and one was uncertain about the time commitment.

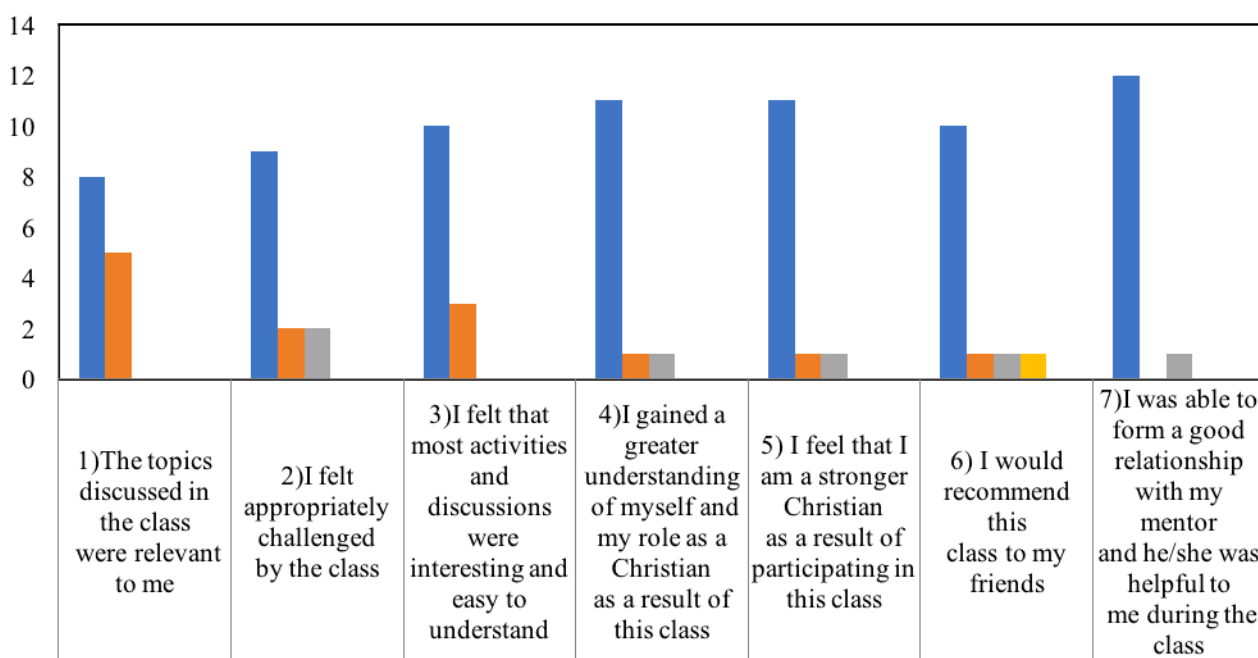
All the results were encouraging, especially for the initial use of the curriculum. As part of every class, we had a member of the church share their life's story with the class. Several parents indicated that these guest speakers were one of the highlights to their children. I feel all four surveys gave a valid picture of how the class was accepted. One thing that helped obtain an unbiased response was that the surveys were returned anonymously. Anonymity gave each person freedom to respond honestly and candidly, which was greatly encouraged when the surveys were distributed.

The most meaningful part of the surveys were the parents' and mentors' answers to the essay questions. It was quite clear that 100 percent of both parents and mentors felt the students

received the discipleship education they needed to help make a decision about their confession of faith and baptism.

However, the most encouraging statements came from the student surveys. Students were asked what they liked least in the class. Over half said the thing they liked least was when the class ended.

Student Survey



■ always	8	9	10	11	11	10	12
■ usually	5	2	3	1	1	1	
■ sometimes		2		1	1	1	1
■ rarely						1	
■ never							

Summary of Student Essay Questions

The students were asked three essay questions. Following is a narrative of their answers.

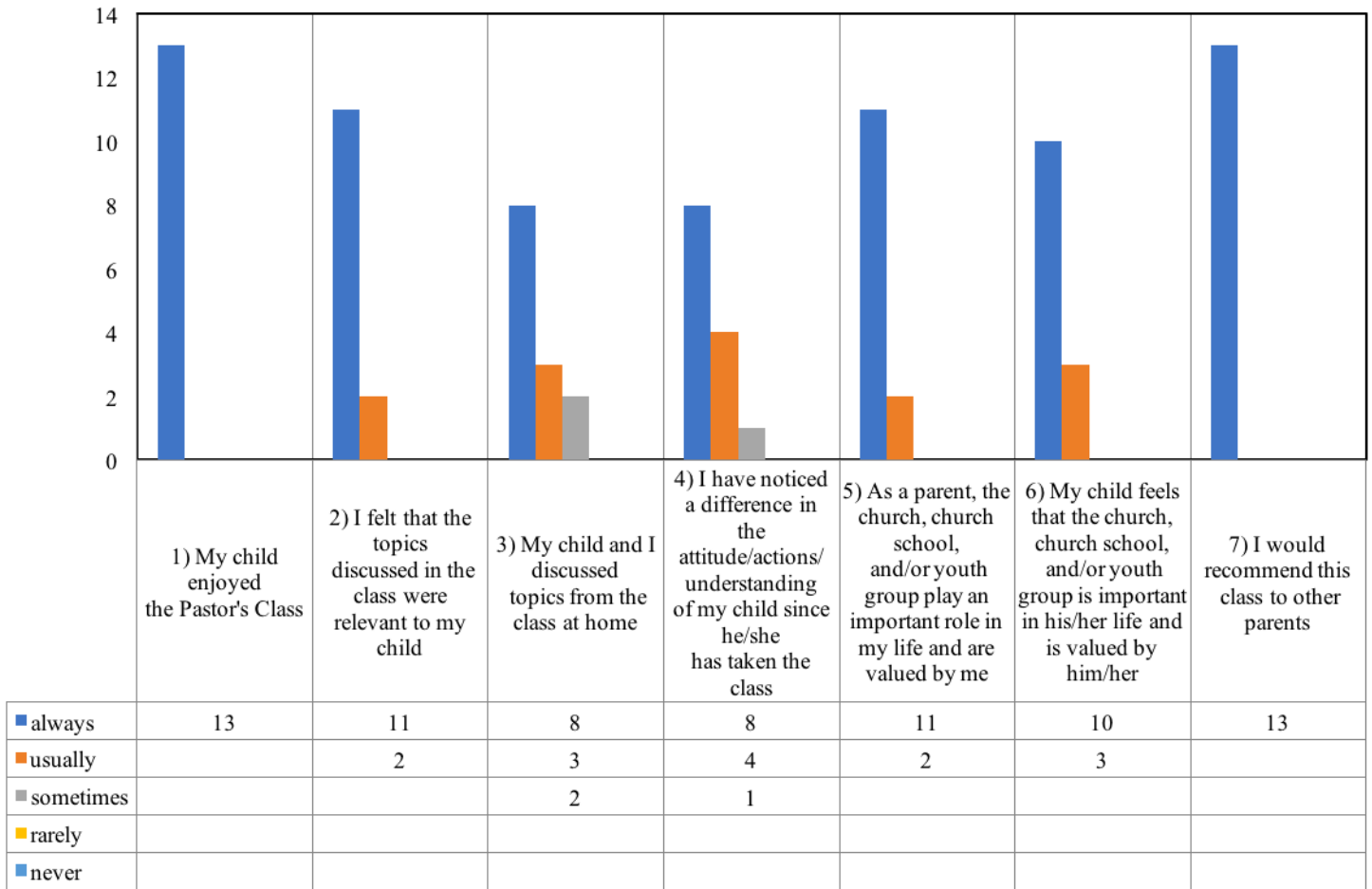
When asked the most important thing they learned, several students felt that God always being with them, trusting in God, God and Jesus extending unconditional love through the church to them, and trusting God even in the bad times were their most important lessons. Others felt that the importance of helping others, especially the less fortunate, and that being a Christian in today's world were most important. Having faith in Jesus was an overriding theme for most of the students.

When they were asked about their favorite part of the class, most students referred to one or more of the guest speakers who talked about their professions and how it interacts with their faith. Others expressed their joy in learning more about the outreach projects of the church, especially the Interfaith Food Pantry. Learning the mentors' stories and getting to know the mentors was also mentioned as their favorite part.

The answer to the third essay question proved to me that the curriculum and the class were valued by the students. The third question asked about their least favorite part of the class, and several answered when it ended and that it was too short. Several others said there was no least favorite part; they enjoyed everything. One student said the class felt a little long and another said that waking up at 4:00 a.m. to be baptized on Easter morning was her least favorite. Those answers affirmed that the students caught my passion for them and for the class and gleaned from it important data that will affect the rest of their lives.

The one subject in the class that several of the students did not like was the session on church history. The history of the early church as well as the history of our denomination did not interest them. However, the history of our local congregation captured their attention and imagination. They actually asked for more of our local history. Regardless of their lack of interest for church history in general, it is important for them to learn. As I teacher, I want to find a more interesting and compelling way to teach it.

Parent Survey

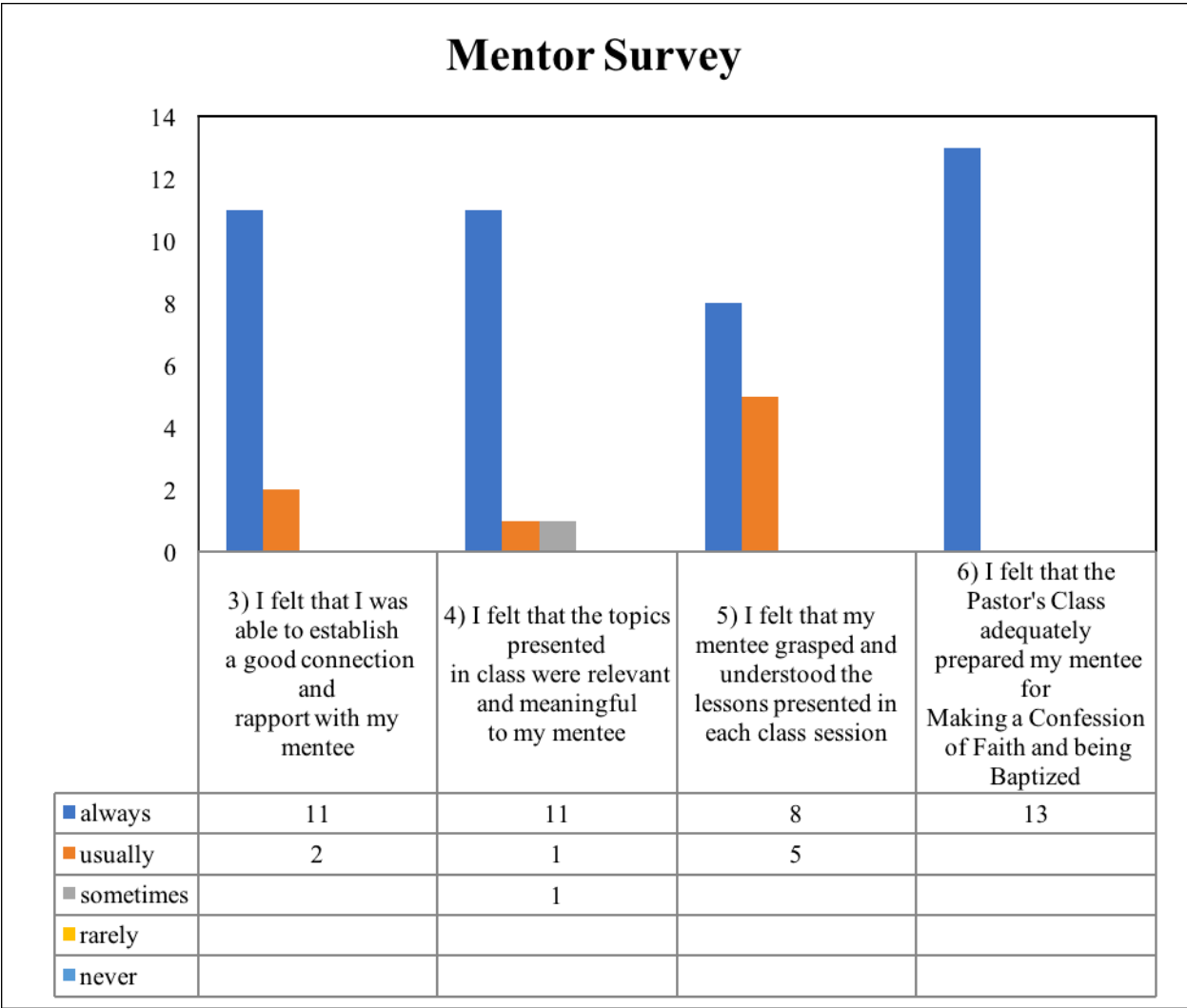


Summary of Parent Essay Questions

Parents were asked: What is the most important thing the church could teach your children? There were three overriding answers: 1) teach kindness, respect, compassion, love and forgiveness; 2) “give back” by giving oneself to others; and 3) to have faith in God and take a daily walk with Jesus. One parent said, and it summarizes almost all the parents, “to know the love and grace of Christ for him and everyone.”

The answers to the question inquiring about the highlight of the class to the parents were varied. The guest speakers were the first highlight, but a close second was hearing their children talk about their faith. The other highlight was having the students educated about Jesus and developing an in-depth knowledge about Him as a role model.

The parents' idea of the child's highlight had a great deal to do with the mentors and the role the mentors played in their child's life. The guest speakers were viewed as a highlight by the parents for their children, and baptism was a major point for many. There were two suggestions made regarding future classes. One was the need for more community service, and the referenced how to relate with unbelievers.



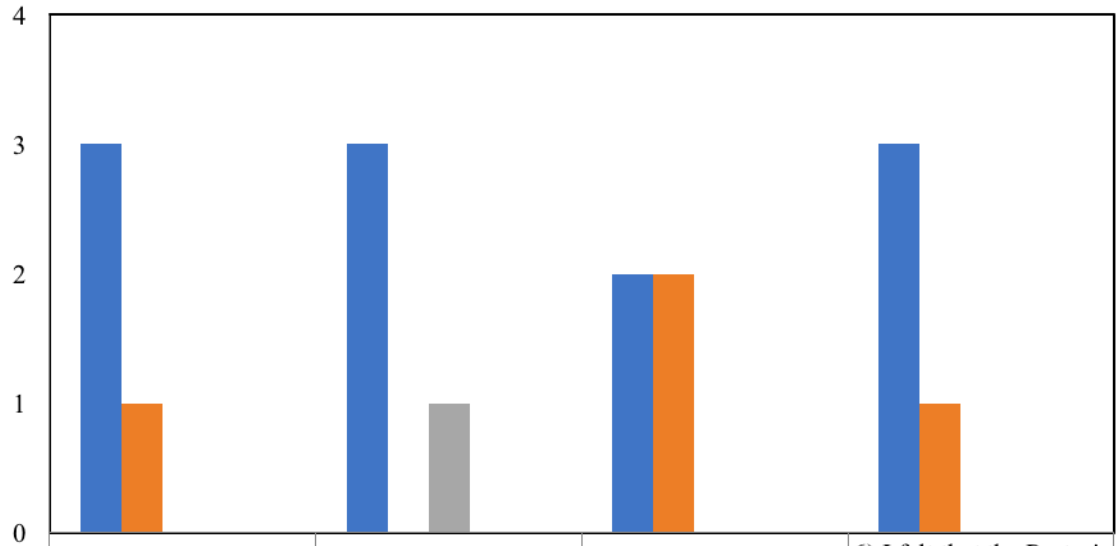
Summary of Mentor Essay Questions

I asked the mentors if there were topics that I should have included in the curriculum that were not in it. Ten of the thirteen either gave a *no* reply or left the answer blank. Three verbalized that they felt everything that needed to be covered was included. Some suggested teaching more of our local church history and going more in depth on how the congregation is run.

One question asked if there were subjects they felt were not relevant to the class. Nine answered *no* while three wrote how much their students enjoyed the class. One suggested that an additional Sunday session would be desirable.

I inquired if there was anything that would have made their experience better or easier. Five said *no*. It was suggested that a biography of the mentee, given to the mentor a week prior to the class, would be a great help. Another parent shared that mentors would be helped by having their own notebook, similar to the ones given to the students. All the responses were positive regarding the class.

Junior Mentor Survey



	3) I felt that I was able to establish a good connection and rapport with my mentee	4) I felt that the topics presented in class were relevant and meaningful to my mentee	5) I felt that my mentee grasped and understood the lessons presented in each class session	6) I felt that the Pastor's Class adequately prepared my mentee for Making a Confession of Faith and being Baptized
■ always	3	3	2	3
■ usually	1		2	1
■ sometimes		1		
■ rarely				
■ never				

Summary of Junior Mentor Essay Questions

Three of the four gave a *no* response to the questions about the need for other topics. One suggested more time be spent on community service. In comparing this class to other classes in which they have participated, they generally felt that the subjects were similar but much more interesting and complete. When asked if there was anything that would help them have a better or easier experience, the response was that junior mentors could be given more responsibility.

PART D: THE FUTURE: REFLECTIONS ON RESEARCH

What I Would Do Differently

As this project came to a conclusion, it was time to reflect on where the curriculum has taken us. A major question I asked was whether the curriculum and subsequent class had meaning to the students. Did it give them a viable faith for today and something meaningful to take into their future lives? The student surveys indicated that the subjects were relevant and that they understood some of the more difficult lessons taught. As to future years, only time will tell.

We obviously need to make some improvements, mostly in the areas of organization and greater involvement by the mentors prior to the class start. As a result of feedback received, we will prepare lesson handouts for all mentors and junior mentors prior to each session. We will also give the mentors and junior mentors more background information regarding their assigned students. Information, such as grade, age, school, siblings, family make-up, etc., will give the mentors a better insight into the students with whom they will be working. This knowledge will make it easier for the mentors to understand their students and will also help shorten the time of introductions in the first session.

While we used an interactive PowerPoint presentation to highlight each session, I would like to be more creative by adding more YouTube presentations, film, videos, and television clips to make the subjects more captivating. This addition will help, especially in sessions devoted primarily to history. An example would be showing the 1990 award winning film *Wrestling with God*, which tells the story of Alexander and Thomas Campbell, two of the four founders of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

I would like to involve as many of the mentors from this year as possible in future classes. While being a mentor requires a major commitment of time and energy, the students'

response to their mentors was, with only one exception, outstanding. The mentors and junior mentors were evaluated as positive and a great addition to the class. This first group of mentors now has experience both with the curriculum and with middle school students. That makes them an important asset to the success of future classes.

I would like to expand the number of junior mentors so that each student has a junior mentor as part of their support team. The four junior mentors from this year will be good evangelists within the high school youth group. Ideally, I would like to have juniors or seniors who have served in some type of leadership in the church or youth groups. I would like to spend two or three hours prior to the beginning of the class leading a short introduction to the class for the junior mentors. This introduction would give them insight into what to expect in terms of subjects to be covered in the class and would give them an opportunity, in the confidence of their own group, to react to the subject content and the assignments that will be made.

After using the curriculum for this class, I see that some rearrangement of subjects might be helpful in the future. Since one of the primary desired outcomes for the class is having the students choose to make their confession of faith and follow that confession with baptism, I would like to cover those two subjects earlier in the sequence with revisiting throughout the rest of the sessions. As interesting as our special guests were, I am considering giving them a time limit of twenty-five minutes for their presentation and questions. Two exceptions to that would be a tour of the Interfaith Food Pantry facility, which is on our campus, and the presentation by the police officer. The pantry is a major mission ministry within our church and community, and the officer needs time to answer questions, such as those relating to drugs on campus, kidnapping, bullying, active shooters, and other subjects which cause youth deep concern.

Finally, as I look toward the future, I realize that the curriculum presented in this paper could be expanded to cover several more weeks. It could also be modified for an adult discipleship class. I also want to lift the consciousness of the congregation, especially the families of the students, so they want more sessions of the class. I was encouraged by the students saying the thing they liked least about the class was when it ended. Our students are involved in weekend activities of all kinds—sports, drama, computer robotics competition, singing, and dancing, to name just a few. While my dream would be to expand the class by several more weeks, I will be happy for the moment knowing that our initial use of the ten-week curriculum was judged positively and with appreciation. I believe that we demonstrated the need for such a curriculum; we tested it, and successfully evaluated it. In my opinion, the curriculum is a viable and valuable tool for educating middle school students in Christian discipleship.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This entire D.Min. project has been enlightening and enjoyable. After studying the literature, interviewing professional educators, building relationships with middle school parents and their families, and identifying areas in spiritual formation that were neglected in the curriculum we had been using, I decided that a new and different curriculum was needed to meet the needs of middle school students in our congregation. Therefore, I decided to write a curriculum based on the insights I gained from the literature and research. This curriculum needed to incorporate all the traditional subjects usually taught in a Discipleship Class, such as, but not limited to, the life and teachings of Jesus, the history of the church, religious practices, confession of faith, and baptism.

However, the literature also strongly suggested that curriculum for this age group be action oriented. Students in this population love getting involved, helping others, and having an active voice in how they spend their time. The literature also supported my belief that philanthropy was a positive way to actively engage these students. I found that adding a philanthropic segment allowed a natural transition into the subject of Christian stewardship, one of the major emphases in Jesus' teachings.

Another subject which the literature covered was the importance of pairing students with mentors. Mentors, by sharing their own faith, help the students formulate their faith. Furthermore, having both adult and peer mentors provides a means for the students to hear the importance of accepting Jesus and living one's life according to His teachings from someone other than clergy.

I felt that having the opportunity to teach this curriculum during these impressionable years was so much more beneficial than trying to reach older, high school students. Thus, a major consideration is the timing in introducing this curriculum into the total educational plans of the local congregation.

The evaluations of the curriculum, both the written ones included in this paper and the verbal evaluations held during informal conversations with class members, their families, and their mentors have been invaluable. I believe the evaluations from all four research populations indicated satisfaction with the curriculum and a desire to make it the main discipleship training within our context for middle school students.

John H. Westerhoff III, in looking toward his future, said, “. . . I intend to devote myself to . . . Christian education that focuses on the institution, the imagination, the performing arts, revelation, and experience.”⁴⁵ Today, I understand his statement better than ever before. As I look to my future, after fifty-seven years in ministry, I am convinced that the most important influence I can wield is with the youth of our church. It is in them that I see a bright future, not necessarily in the church as we have known it, but in the church that they will build.

⁴⁵ John H. Westerhoff III, *Will Our Children Have Faith?* (New York, NH: Morehouse Publishing, 2012), 51.

APPENDIX A

Affirmation of Faith from the Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

We confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and proclaim Him Lord and Savior of the world.

In Christ's name and by His grace, we accept our mission of witness and service to all people.

We rejoice in God, maker of heaven and earth, and in the covenant of love which binds us to God and one another.

Through baptism into Christ, we enter into newness of life and are made one with the whole people of God.

In the communion of the Holy Spirit, we are joined together in discipleship and in obedience to Christ.

At the table of the Lord, we celebrate with thanksgiving the saving acts and presence of Christ.

Within the universal church, we receive the gift of ministry and the light of scripture.

In the bonds of Christian faith, we yield ourselves to God that we may serve the One whose kingdom has no end.

Blessings, glory, and honor be to God forever. Amen.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Ronald Osborn, *The Faith We Affirm: Basic Beliefs of Disciples of Christ* (St. Louis, MO: The Bethany Press, 1979), 8–9.

APPENDIX B

The Curriculum

A Journey of Faith for Middle-School Students

A Curriculum in Discipleship for Students in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

NOTE:

Primary resource books used for Disciple's beliefs and theology included:
People of the Chalice by Colbert S. Cartwright, *A Handbook for Today's Disciples*
(Revised Edition) by D. Duane Cummins, *What We Believe* by James M. Flanagan,
Experiment in Liberty and *The Faith We Affirm* by Ronald Osborn,
and *We Call Ourselves Disciples* by Ken Teegarden

Session One

Major Emphasis:

Introductions/Icebreaker; Jesus and the Sermon on the Mount; introduction of philanthropic concepts for class.

Objectives:

- Facilitate student introductions
- Familiarize students with notebook provided for class
- Introduce Jesus as a person and the Son of God
- Introduce, read, and discuss together the first part of the Sermon on the Mount
- Introduce one or two teachings of Jesus about giving
- Lead brainstorming about philanthropic projects

Key Questions:

- Prior to this class, how many people in this room did you know?
- What are the three key points you learned about Jesus?
- What is the Sermon on the Mount?

Learning Activities:

- During this session, we will have the students play a game with their mentors while eating lunch, learning as much as they can about their lives, faith history, and involvement in our congregation.
- After lunch, each student will be responsible for introducing their mentor to the group, and each mentor will be responsible for introducing their student to the group.
- Following introductions, there will be time to go through the student notebook, looking at the goals and learning objectives for each session.
- We will then examine Jesus' teachings: His ministry; His apostles; His life, death, and resurrection; His Church; and His role in Christian history.
- As a group, we will look at the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, chapters 5 through 7, with special emphasis on the Beatitudes.

- There will be two breaks during each session for refreshments and relaxation. During these breaks, students will be encouraged to talk with their fellow students regarding their reaction to the information shared.

Processing/Assessment Activities:

Before leaving class, each student will write a minimum of one sentence summarizing what they learned in this session. Each student will be asked to write about who Jesus is to them (in their notebooks prior to leaving). There will be a PowerPoint presentation with each session articulating the key points in the lesson.

Overview:

The Beatitudes, the core teachings of Jesus, are critical to students' understanding of the role of Jesus in their lives and in their church.

Philanthropic Projects Description:

We will discuss the meaning of philanthropy and its relationship with the Christian concept of stewardship. Then each student will be given a credit of \$50.00. It is the young person's choice on how to spend it, but it must be philanthropic in nature. They can give it to a homeless individual, a cause in which they believe that helps people, or they can work together with other students to increase their \$50.00 to a larger amount. The Philanthropy Project discussion will be part of every class session and will culminate with students deciding together how they wish to spend their money.

Guest Speaker:

Fifteen-minute presentation on "Bead for Life," one philanthropy project.

Homework Assignment:

Look up the mission statement for your school and bring a copy to share with the class next week.

Session Two

Major Emphasis:

The Bible as holy and as literature; Jesus' concept of personal giving; biblical teachings about giving and stewardship.

Objectives:

- Students will be guided through a brief exploration of the Bible—Hebrew Scriptures and New Testament.
- Students will learn one fact about mentor/student that was not revealed last week as a result of the get-acquainted game.
- Students will receive further information regarding philanthropic projects.
- Students will work as a team of six—two students, two mentors and two junior mentors.

Key Questions:

- Prior to the class, how many books of the Bible did you know?
- What was your favorite passage of Scripture?

- Why is it important for us to know what the Bible says?
- Do you have a favorite nonprofit mission or ministry?

Learning Activities:

- Teacher will begin this session by looking at the two major sections of the Bible, the Hebrew Scriptures, and the New Testament Scriptures. Then teacher will break down each section in classifications including history, major prophets, minor prophets, poetry, etc.
- Teacher will discuss the major authors of the books of the Bible, including their language and their place in history between Abraham and the Apostle Paul.
- Expand working group from student and mentor to two students and four mentors.
- Without looking at notes, students will list in their notebooks all the books of the Bible they can remember.
- Lead students to separate books of the Bible into categories.
- Have students explain to their mentor their favorite book of the Bible and why it is their favorite.
- Use refreshment breaks to discuss immediate subject material with fellow students.

Processing/Assessment Activities:

Students will take one of the teachings of Jesus and, with two other students, write a short skit illustrating the teaching. At the end of the session, each student will be asked to write in their notebook what they feel is the most important teaching of the Bible.

Overview:

The major part of our session will be spent on the Gospels with emphasis on the core teachings of Jesus as found in the Sermon on the Mount.

Philanthropic Projects:

After a past week of reflection, each student will say how they would like to spend their \$50.00. Those who wish to give it outright to a person or cause will be asked to identify who will receive their gift. Those wishing to work together to increase their funds to a larger amount will be asked how they intend to do such work. They will work with their mentors and their junior mentors to explore additional creative ideas for fundraising. Depending on the ideas of the group, calendar dates will be assigned to the fund-raising projects.

Guest Speaker:

Fifteen-minute presentation on “The Bible as Literature” and playing the Bible greeting card game.

Homework Assignment:

Read Matthew 5 and pick your favorite teaching/bit of wisdom.

Session Three

Major Emphasis: Personal mission statement, confession of faith

Objectives:

- Students will carefully read several mission statements.
- Students will begin thinking about their own personal mission statements.
- Students will examine the difference between one's mission statement and one's confession of faith.

Key Questions:

- What is the length of a mission statement?
- Which mission statement shown in the PowerPoint most appeals to you?
- Do you agree that your school's mission statement describes what happens at your school?
- What do you see as the difference between a mission statement and a confession of faith?

Learning Activities:

- Students meet with their mentors and begin to define what a mission statement is.
- Students and mentors will read and discuss the mission statements of First Christian Church of North Hollywood, St. Joseph Hospital, Campbell Hall, Laurel Hall, and the Interfaith Food Pantry.
- Students will write a rough draft of a personal mission statement as well as a confession of faith.
- Students will read the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds (handouts and PowerPoint).
- Students will state a goal for inclusion in their mission statement and confession.
- During refreshment breaks, the students will see if other students are making progress in writing their mission statements.

Processing/Assessment Activities:

Play a word game and try to write a class mission statement. Going around the room, everyone contributes one word which is written on a chalk board. Take three turns around the room. Ask the class to jump in as a unit and pick the words and place in the proposed mission statement. If time allows, play the same game with a confession of faith.

Overview:

Students will begin to understand the difference between mission statements and a confession of faith. Students will look at models of successful writing before brainstorming their own and beginning initial drafts. Students will confer with mentors and peers.

Philanthropy Projects:

Students will be asked to share information regarding the organizations, causes, and ministries to which they would like to give what is earned by their joint fundraising efforts. These need not be church related as long as they are legitimate causes or organizations with a sustainable nonprofit track record. Causes that have often caught the attention of this age are a

food pantry, ministries to the homeless, Childhood Diabetes Association, animal rescue organizations, American Cancer Society, children's charities, and the Week of Compassion.

Organizations that provide or have provided services to a member of the student's family, or to a friend, or community member, are favorites and fall within the broad category of philanthropic giving. As the project continues, some of the student's causes may be combined so that, in the end, there are fewer charities. This results in larger gifts to a few charities chosen by the students rather than smaller gifts.

Guest Speaker:

Twenty-minute presentation entitled "Pursuing Your Dreams: Staying the Course" by a former Navy Seal and world renowned authority on Disney collectables.

Homework Assignment:

If you met Jesus for a cup of coffee, a milk shake, or a pizza, what one question would you want to ask Him? Be thoughtful and consider all of the questions you might want to ask. Then choose one.

Session Four

Major Emphasis:

Jesus' greatest teaching—love

Objectives:

- To explore Jesus' teachings about love
- To examine I Corinthians 13 and the description of love
- To apply spiritual teachings of love to everyday life

Key Questions:

- Is it possible to really love one's enemy?
- Is it possible to turn the other cheek?
- How would Jesus handle bullies?

Learning Activities:

- During this session, the students will be asked to identify what they believe are some of the most important teachings of Jesus.
- Following an appropriate time of answers and discussion as to why the students think their answers are correct, we will tell the story of the young man who asked what he must do to inherit eternal life.
- This beautiful story will promote a discussion about Jesus' two-pronged answer: *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength*, and *You shall love your neighbor as yourself*.
- The students will be asked to share with the class what each answer means to them. During this discussion, the concept of bullying will be introduced.
- Have each student discuss one instance in their lives when they felt truly loved. How did that instance affect them? How would they define such love?

Processing/Assessment Activities:

During the two breaks, divide into groups of three students (no mentors in these groups) for students to discuss how they perceive love in their own lives. In their notebooks, before leaving, students will write their definition of love.

Overview:

The question “Can we love the bully who, for a time, ruins my life?” will be a central theme. The takeaway of this session is that we can only change the world through our ability to truly love as Jesus loved.

Philanthropic Projects:

Today we will take the list of causes and organizations that the students shared in Session Three and briefly discuss the pros and cons of each cause or organization. During this time, teacher will identify the relationship between students, causes, and organizations. For instance, if a student’s father and grandfather have Huntington’s Disease, we know the student has a 50/50 chance of inheriting the disease, thus supporting organizations doing research into finding the cause and cure for Huntington’s Disease becomes a *personal and emotional* motivation for the class to raise funds. This same personal motivation is true for organizations dealing with cancer, diabetes, pet rescue, children’s diseases, and many other philanthropic causes.

Guest Speaker:

Twenty-minute presentation entitled “Make the Sky Your Limit” by a retired Disney executive who started as a custodian and worked her way up to the executive offices. The essence of the presentation is always doing your best at all times. It will lead to success in endeavors.

Homework Assignment:

After writing your definition of love in your notebook, seek out three other people: a family member, a peer-member at school, and another adult that you admire. Ask for their reactions to your definition and then be prepared to share those reactions with your mentors next week.

Session Five

Major Emphasis:

The Catholic Church or The Church Universal

Objectives:

- To give students the understanding that *church* is more than just their local congregations
- To illustrate the struggles through the centuries encountered by the faithful
- To begin to instill within the students that Church, with a capital C, means The Church Universal or The Catholic Church, not to be confused with the Roman Catholic Church or the Old Catholic Church.

Key Questions:

- How old is an *old* church?
- How many years make up a decade, a century, ten centuries?

- How old is the Christian Church?

Learning Activities:

- This session will be devoted to exploring the history and development of the Christian Church as the Body of Christ. Starting with the Day of Pentecost, we will trace the development of the New Testament churches, Paul's letters to these groups, the general development of the church through the Reformation and the development of the Protestant Church.
- During each of the two class refreshment breaks, students will discuss with one other student and mentors what different religious background each student has in their family.
- Students will examine the drawing, "The Church Tree," and try to identify on what branch those religious faiths grow.
- With the help of their mentor, students will write in their notebooks the differences they understand between those religious backgrounds.

Processing/Assessment Activities:

After the first break, students will be asked to write in their notebooks the religious backgrounds the other students shared. After the second break, students will be asked again to write in their notebooks the religious background the second student shared.

Overview:

Our main emphasis will be in looking at the Protestant movement and the place that the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) plays in that movement. In the light of the fact that the Disciples of Christ is one of the newer mainline denominations, it is important that the students get a perspective of history—where we came from and why we believe as we do.

Philanthropic Projects:

Once the class has narrowed down the list of suggestions, it is time to learn about each prospective cause and organization. This can be done in several different ways:

- Dividing the class into a number of causes and assigning one cause to each group
- Having the entire class research by utilizing the internet, listing everything about a cause and then moving on to the next cause
- Sharing personal experiences with a cause or organization to determine whether it was a positive or negative experience.

This is an area where the experience of mentors is helpful. Additionally, the junior mentors play an important role as they share with the current class what their own class accomplished, thus motivating the present class to set higher goals and accomplish more.

Guest Speaker:

Twenty-minute presentation about "Trees 4 Kids" and the history of the FCCNH Christmas tree lot. Ninety-five percent of all proceeds go to nonprofit agencies serving the needs of children.

Homework Assignment:

If you were able to have lunch with the Apostle Paul, what one question would you want to ask him about the early church?

Session Six

Major Emphasis:

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Objectives:

- To share the story of our beginnings
- To identify key personalities within the beginning of our denomination
- To illustrate the difference between a *brotherhood* or *movement* and a denomination
- To identify the sacred that has been passed down from the beginning to the present

Key Questions:

- What do you think would be a motivation to leave one church or denomination and start a new one?
- In our beginning, what was viewed as truly *sacred*?
- What is the difference between the *Restoration* Movement and the *Reformation* Movement?

Learning Activities:

- During this session, students will study the birth of our denomination. The history begins in the late 1700's with Alexander and Thomas Campbell, father and son, breaking from their Scottish Presbyterian background. Along with the Campbells, students will study Barton Stone, Walter Scott, Raccoon John Smith, and other notable early leaders in the movement. During this session, students will also talk about the old camp meetings, evangelists, *walking Bibles* and the beginnings of our church organization.
- Break up into groups of three students and their mentors and share their involvement and history in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
- Define the two sacred beliefs that motivated the founders to split with their former churches.
- During the refreshment breaks, students will discuss with mentors the stories of the mentors' baptisms or christenings.

Processing/Assessment Activities:

Divide the class into groups with one mentor leading each group. The mentor will lead the students in a group discussion about their definition and beliefs about communion, baptism, mission, and congregational autonomy. These are four areas that help define the Disciples of Christ. A tour of the baptistry will be given and an explanation of how baptism is done will be demonstrated on as many students who wish.

Overview:

Our denomination, founded for the purpose of Christian unity, has split four times. Churches that come out of our religious heritage, the Restoration Movement, are: the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Christian Church (Independent), the Church of Christ, and the Church of Christ (non-instrumental). The reasons for those splits and how it affects our relationships today is a key Disciple issue.

Philanthropic Projects:

In this session, students will work with mentors and junior mentors in organizing fundraising projects and coordinating those projects with the church calendar. With the help of the mentors, teachers and students will identify members of the church family who may want to help the class in their projects.

Guest Speaker:

Thirty-minute presentation by two of the stars of the film, *Wrestling With God*, the history of Alexander and Thomas Campbell, two of the four founders of our denomination. During the talk, film clips from the film will be shown. There will be a Q & A for everyone after the presentation.

Homework Assignment:

Write a brief statement for sharing next week on the subject: What does it mean to be a *rugged individualist*? Would you say that the four founders of our denomination fit that definition? If so, what did they do that was so individualistic or rugged?

Session Seven

Major Emphasis:

Disciple beliefs, theology, and practices

Objectives:

- Students will understand the basic beliefs of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
- Students will understand the background and origin of those beliefs.
- Students will understand and articulate the basic practices of the Disciples, especially in relationship to Holy Communion and Holy Baptism.
- Teacher will present a simple introduction into Disciple theology.

Key Questions:

- What do we believe about the Communion Table? Is everyone welcome or only members of a specific church or only baptized believers?
- Do you believe that the bread and wine of Holy Communion are the actual body and blood of Jesus or symbols of His life?
- Did you ever hear of the term *transubstantiation* and if so, what is it?
- How many forms of Christian baptism can you think of and which is practiced by your church?
- Was the Bible dictated by God or inspired by God?
- Is there a *test of membership* required by our denomination and if so, what is it?

Learning Activities:

- In this session, students will discuss the meaning and origin of several phrases in Disciple history:
 - *Baptism by immersion*
 - *Baptism at the age of accountability*
 - *No creed but Christ, no book but the Bible*
 - *In essentials unity; in non-essentials liberty*
 - *In all things love*

- *We will agree to disagree—agreeably*
- *Where the scriptures speak, we speak; where the scriptures are silent, we are silent*
- Lunch today will be a mini-Passover feast led by two Jewish high school students from Temple Beth Hillel, one of our partners in the Interfaith Food Pantry. One of our Elders, who was raised in a Jewish/Christian home, will prepare the brisket and the symbolic plates. Only a small portion of the entire Passover script will be used but enough to illustrate the meal at which Jesus instituted the Last Supper.
- During the first refreshment break, students will double up with another student and talk about what they believe about Holy Communion.
- During the second refreshment break, students will double up with a different student and discuss what they believe about baptism.

Processing/Assessment Activities:

Divide the class into four groups with at least one junior mentor in each group. Give each group a subject that cannot be known to the other groups: baptism, communion, confession of faith, and evangelism. In five minutes, students will prepare a pantomime illustrating the word given the group. Then, without touching another student, students will act out the subject given to the group. The winning group gets a prize (probably an extra dessert).

If time permits, we will conclude this session by pairing students with their mentors and junior mentors for a discussion regarding baptism and christening. Both the mentors and junior mentors will have an opportunity to share their own personal experiences, especially dwelling on whether they were baptized by immersion, sprinkling, or some other form. The mentors will communicate with their students that our congregation has a wide variety of Protestant denominations represented in it as well as those people from Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Buddhism, and Judaism, each of which has its own traditions and practices for entrance into a church, temple, or religious organization.

Overview:

This session is actually the second part of Session Six. We will be discussing the theology and practices of our denomination.

Philanthropic Projects:

There will be no philanthropic discussion in Session Seven.

Guest Speaker:

Thirty-minute presentation by director of the Valley Interfaith Food Pantry, including history and statistics and concluding with a tour of the distribution facility.

Homework Assignment:

Comparing the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) with other Protestant denominations, write one thing that you find is significantly unique to our denomination.

Session Eight

Major Emphasis:

The history of our local congregation, First Christian Church of North Hollywood.

Objectives:

- To introduce the students to the fascinating stories about our local church family
- To give the students a sense of ownership of the church to which they will become members following their confession of faith and baptism
- To illustrate that history always has some fascinating details (such as one minister owning the church property and losing it to another church; a non-Christian business man traded a prime piece of real estate to the church because he admired the nerve of the minister), we will discuss all the programs, committees, board, and church staff in order to give the students an idea of the investment in time and money it takes to operate the church.

Key Questions:

- When was our congregation started, and what was its name?
- What is its name today?
- How much did the present campus cost?
- How much did it cost to repair the Northridge earthquake damage?
- Name five people who have memorials to them in the church (such as the sanctuary pulpit, the patio, a pew, a window, etc.).
- Can you explain the difference between a committee, council, and board in our church?

Learning Activities:

We will have one learning activity for this session. The class will be divided into three teams, each team with a junior mentor in charge, and embark on a mock scavenger hunt. Each team will be given a legal pad of paper and pencil. They will have twenty minutes to explore the entire campus and note all the memorial gifts and plaques. The team who finds the most memorials will receive a gift. Then, teachers will identify some of the oldest plaques and tell the stories of those people. (NOTE: There are over 150 memorial plaques on campus—some as small as a book or Bible and some as large as the entire chancel area or fellowship patio.)

Processing/Assessment Activities:

Each student will be asked to write in their notebook two things: 1) three of their favorite memorial gifts and 2) the person memorialized that they would most like to meet.

Overview:

The history of our local congregation spans nine and a half decades and five different locations. As result of this session, we want the students to have a sense of history and ownership of the church. It is important for them to know at least a little bit about some of the shakers and movers of the church and how what they accomplished is reflected in the church today. It is also important for the students to gain insight into the devotion of the people who sacrificed much to build our present campus.

Philanthropic Projects:

At the conclusion of this session, the parents of the students will be invited to have some refreshments and stay for the philanthropic review. We will go over the projects the students have identified as ones they wish to financially support and the dates being suggested for fundraising events. Recognizing that not all the students can make all the fundraisers, we will present an equitable solution: for each fund-raiser, the students who participate will share in dividing the profits for their specific cause. The more fundraisers a student participates in, the greater amount of profit they will share. At the end of the session with the parents, we will ask for parent volunteers to help in some of the events.

Guest Speaker:

Ten-minute presentation regarding the history of the Advent Theater and a thirty-minute presentation of a theater performance.

Homework Assignment:

If you were to tell a stranger about your church home, what one thing would be the most important to share and inspire your friend to want to join your church?

Session Nine

Major Emphasis:

God's law and society's law

Objectives:

- To illustrate to the students the laws of God—Ten Commandments, the Golden Rule, Jesus' legal teachings (love God, love neighbor), instructions from the Apostle Paul
- To draw a comparison to society's laws
- To implant the idea that all laws, whether God's or society's, have a purpose to protect and should be obeyed
- To allow students to question the law in a safe and encouraging setting

Key Questions:

- Of all the laws and prophets, which is the most important law (commandment)?
- Of all the laws of society, which is the most important law?
- Are some laws out of date (in their meaning) in today's society, and, if so, do you have an illustration?
- If you were a judge, which broken law would you judge the harshest?

Learning /Activities:

- The highlight of this session will be the guest appearance of one of our church members who is an undercover officer for the Los Angeles Police Department. He was born and raised in our church, and when he was in the sixth grade, he made his confession of faith and was baptized. The students will have time prior to his arrival to formulate any questions they would like to ask.
- This is a session where the use of drugs can be openly discussed, instructions given about what to do if students see a drug deal, or if they are approached by someone selling drugs. He also touches on kidnapping and stalking and how to guard against them. He

emphasizes that one of the best defenses is to always be aware of our environment and the importance of *if you see something, say something*.

Processing/Assessment Activities:

During the first refreshment break, students will team up in groups of three and talk about any personal encounters they have had with the police. During the second refreshment break, students will team up in different groups of three and discuss the same thing.

Overview:

In the life of a teenager living in an American city in the 21st century, this session may be one of the most important in the entire ten-week class. Most middle-school students in a large city, such as Los Angeles, rarely have an opportunity to meet a law enforcement officer personally in a non-threatening atmosphere.

Philanthropic Projects:

Students will work with their mentors in developing sandwich board signs to advertise their cause or charity. These boards will be worn at future Meet and Greet fellowship times on Sunday morning and on a Unity Walk event in the future.

Guest Speaker:

Thirty-minute presentation by a LAPD officer entitled “God’s Laws and Society’s Laws.”

Homework Assignment:

Write a fifty-word essay on what you learned through the interview and through talking with the LAPD officer.

- What surprised you?
- What wasn’t asked that you would have liked the officer to discuss?
- Has this changed your attitude or preconceived ideas about police, and if so, in what way specifically?

Session Ten

Major Emphasis:

Living as a Christian in a non-Christian world.

Objectives:

- To lift up various faiths in our community; students will learn a little about every faith encountered by themselves and their peers.
- To implant the idea that one does not have to defend the Christian faith, only live it.
- To teach respect for all faiths, whether we understand them or not.

Key Questions:

- With what religious faiths have you had a personal contact?
- Do you have religious faiths other than Christianity represented in your family?
- In your opinion, what is the most important characteristic a Christian exhibits in their life?

- Do you feel that some religious faiths do more harm than good? If so, which ones and what harm?

Learning Activities:

- Students will divide into two groups with their mentors as observers. One group will be the *Disciples of Christ* and the other group will be *another denomination*.
- Students will be paired one on one. The Disciple students will be asked to describe to the other denomination what the Disciples faith is all about, without saying anything negative about any other faith. The other denomination students may ask any questions regarding faith that comes to mind.
- After ten minutes, the students reverse roles.
- After this exercise, the students will come back to the whole group and share what they said, how they felt, and if they felt defensive at any time.
- After discussion, the group will again be divided into two groups. This time, one group will be *Christian* and the other group will be *non-Christian*. The process will be the same. After the exercise, the students will again share with the group their feelings and reactions.
- After this exercise, the students will have ten to fifteen minutes to ask any questions they have regarding making their confession of faith and their baptism.

Processing/Assessment Activities:

Most of this session will be in activities that involve sharing feelings and reactions.

Overview:

Students today, especially those living in large cities, are exposed to a variety of religions, including Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and atheism as well as a wide variety of Christian denominations. Because some of these faiths are aggressive in communicating their beliefs, and some may even be evangelistic in trying to convert others to their faith, it is important for students in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to: 1) respect the beliefs of others no matter how different these beliefs may seem, and 2) be well versed in what Disciples believe and why, and be able to articulate these beliefs in a non-argumentative way.

Philanthropic Projects:

We will review all the dates and activities thus far scheduled.

Guest Speaker:

Twenty-minute presentation by a legitimate Nigerian Princess who will speak about living as a Christian in a non-Christian world.

Homework Assignments:

None

The Future:

Announce the schedule for making their confessions of faith and baptism. Announce dates of swim parties and class dinner with mentors, parents, and guest speakers.

APPENDIX C

Student Survey (Actual content)

Please answer each question with one letter as follows:

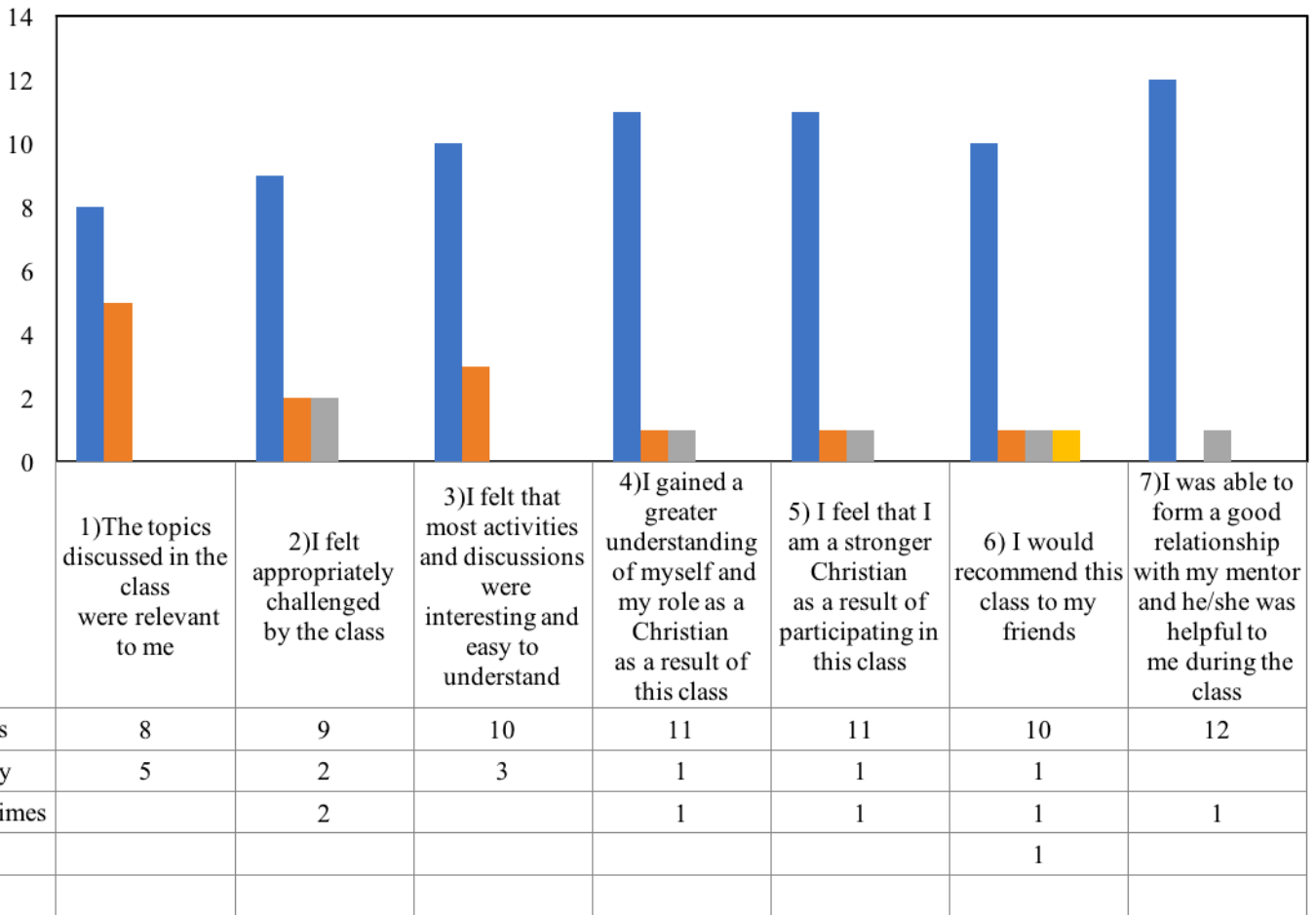
- A. Always
- B. Usually
- C. Sometimes
- D. Rarely
- E. Never

1. The topics discussed in the class were relevant to me.
A B C D E
2. I felt appropriately challenged by the class.
A B C D E
3. I felt that most activities and discussions were interesting and easy to understand.
A B C D E
4. I gained a greater understanding of myself and my role as a Christian as a result of this class.
A B C D E
5. I feel that I am a stronger Christian as a result of participating in this class.
A B C D E
6. I would recommend this class to my friends.
A B C D E
7. I was able to form a good relationship with my mentor and he/she was helpful to me during the class.
A B C D E

Please provide short answers to the following questions:

8. The most important thing that I learned in the class was:
9. My favorite part of the class was:
10. My least favorite part of the Pastor's Class was:

Student Survey



Responses to Student Essay Questions

8. *The most important thing I learned in this class was:*

- God is always with me.
- I learned more about our Church. I learned more about being a Christian in today's world and knowing my mission.
- The importance of my role as a Christian and my relationship with God.
- My faith in Jesus.
- When we learned about beads for life because each bracelet that was sold helped people that are in need from Uganda.
- To trust in the Lord and do good.
- Was to trust in God more than anyone or anything else.
- How important it is to help others. Simple gestures from me can make a difference in someone's life.

- That I will always be unconditionally loved.
- That God is always caring for you and sometimes he works in mysterious ways.
- About God's unconditional love.

9. *My favorite part of the class was:*

- Getting to know my mentor.
- The speakers. And Pastor Bob was funny.
- Learning about the food pantry and the baptisms.
- Learning about Jesus and eating ice cream.
- Learning about lots of different people.
- When we got to learn new things every day, such as the food pantry, beads for life, and more.
- Having special guests and really smart mentors.
- When we got to meet a really cool cop.
- My favorite part was being baptized.
- Building a stronger bond with my church members who participated.
- When the women from Uganda came to speak to us.
- I loved hearing the mentor's stories.

10. *My least favorite part of the class*

- Sometimes it felt a little long.
- I did not have any friends in the class and really didn't know any other of the kids.
- I didn't have a least favorite part of the class. I honestly loved everything about it.
- n/a
- Waking up at four in the morning to get baptized on Easter Day. The water was very cold, but in the end, it was worth it.
- When I had to be gone for dance completion.
- Eating pasta.
- It was too short.
- When it had to end. I really enjoyed learning about God.
- When we had to do our last class.
- I did not have a least favorite part. It was all good.

APPENDIX D

Parent Survey

Please answer each question with one letter as follows:

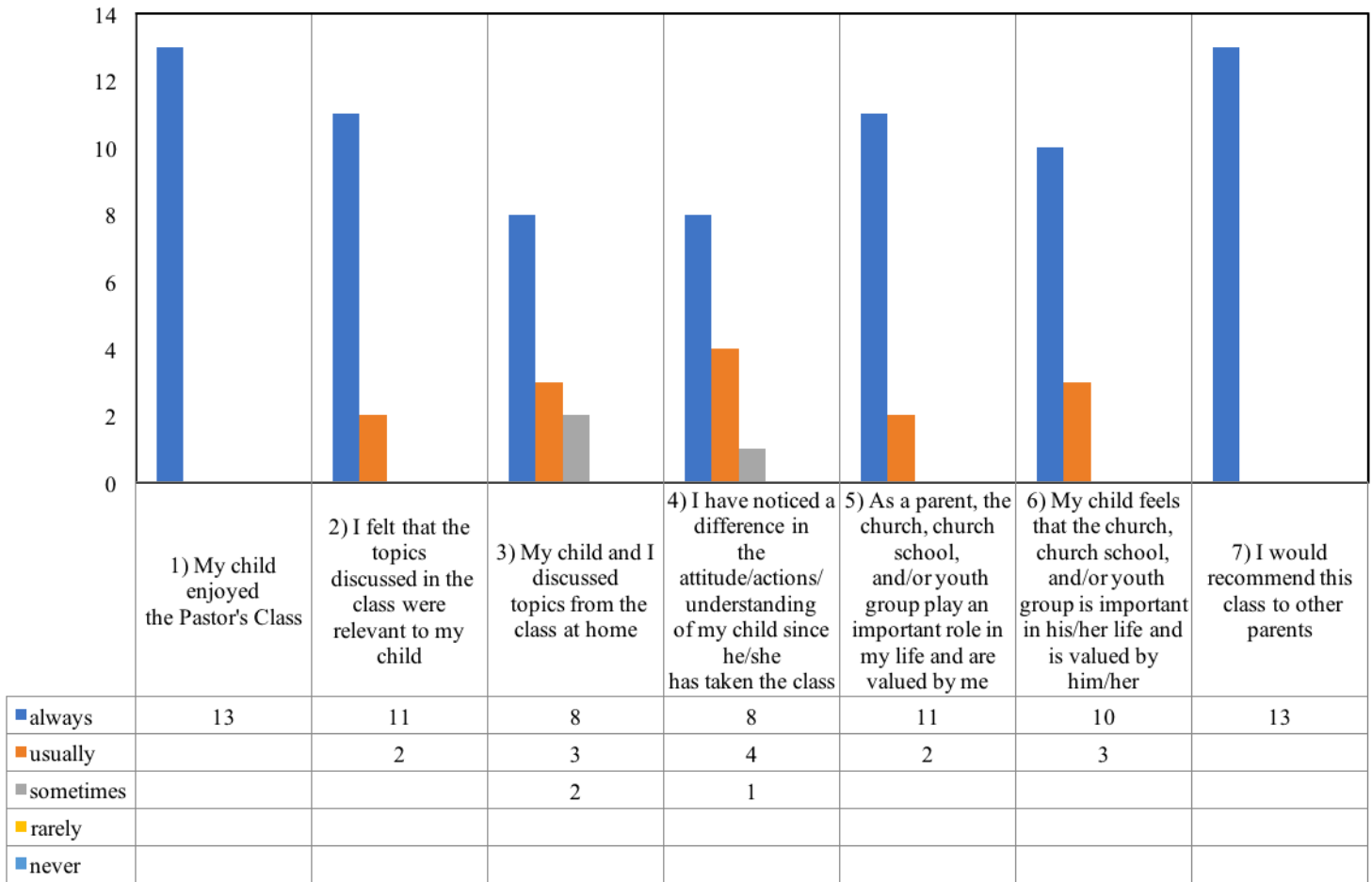
- A. Always
- B. Usually
- C. Sometimes
- D. Rarely
- E. Never

1. My child enjoyed the 2018 Pastor's Class.
A B C D E
2. I felt that the topics discussed in the class were relevant to my child.
A B C D E
3. My child and I discussed topics from the class at home.
A B C D E
4. I have noticed a difference in the attitude/actions/understanding of my child since he/she has taken the class.
A B C D E
5. As a parent, the church, church school, and/or youth group play an important role in my life and are valued by me.
A B C D E
6. My child feels that the church, church school, and/or youth group is important in his/her life and is valued by him/her.
A B C D E
7. I would recommend this class to other parents.
A B C D E

Please provide answers to the following questions:

8. The most important thing that the church can teach my child is:
9. As a parent, the highlight of the Pastor's Class was:
10. For my child, the highlight of the Pastor's Class was:
11. Some topics that I had hoped would be covered in the class, but were not are:

Parent Survey



Responses to Parent Essay Questions

8. *The most important thing that the church can teach my child is:*

- Faith, love, and service. In his own words *to help others in need*.
- Kindness, compassion, love, forgiveness.
- How to give back to the community and learning that there is something larger than us.
- How to treat others with kindness, respect, and love and to also be respected for the person they are.
- That they are loved just as they are. And they will never look into the eyes of someone God doesn't love.
- Having faith in God, having a daily relationship with Jesus, knowing there is a community that is here for them. The power of hope and love.
- Teaching them to be loving, but most important, teaching them to forgive and to try not to judge people for who they are.

- How to live life as a good Christian.
- The love and grace of Christ for him and everyone.
- Giving of oneself to others.

9. *As a parent, the highlight of the Pastor's Class was:*

- The guest speakers were the highlight. It helped us as parents show our child that many people of many walks of life have strong faith.
- Lulu's independence and friendship.
- Having Abryelle so excited about spending time discussing her belief.
- The most obvious answer is the baptisms on Easter. However, I loved seeing my children beam and compete to tell us what they learned from Pastor's Class that day.
- Presenting my favorite service work—Beads for Life.
- Education on Jesus in an in-depth and relatable manner with discussion and role models speaking as well in the class. Plus, a chance to get to know your pastor better.
- Seeing the joy on their face as they tell stories from class; knowing that they have a community outside of the home that supports who they are as individuals.
- Watching my son build relationships with his mentors and his excitement with learning more about the Christian faith.
- My son's deepening of his relationship with God.
- The confession of faith and her baptism.

10. *For my child, the highlight of the Pastor's Class was:*

- The undercover detective.
- The mentorship from elders/mentors.
- Spending time with her mentor and getting re-baptized.
- Getting to meet mentors and hearing their stories.
- Hearing the stories of other church members' service projects. Meeting more members of the church.
- Getting to know the pastor better, listening to the speakers.
- Building a stronger bond with their church members.
- Being baptized.
- Getting baptized and enjoying getting to know more adults in the church.
- Learning about the food pantry and her baptism.

11. *Some topics that I had hoped would be covered in the class, but were not are:*

- Ten n/a or None
- We believe that our Pastor covered everything that a 13-year-old should know.
- I would say just actually have them do community service as well.
- How to relate and connect to unbelievers, as a young person, when such friends tell them the Word of God is not true or their Jesus is not real, etc.

APPENDIX E

Mentor Survey

1. I would volunteer to be a mentor again based on this year's experience:
(Circle) YES or NO
2. Based on my experience, I would recommend my peers to consider serving as a mentor for the Pastor's Class:
(Circle) YES or NO

Please answer each question with one letter as follows:

- A. Always
- B. Usually
- C. Sometimes
- D. Rarely
- E. Never

3. I felt that I was able to establish a good connection and rapport with my mentee.

A B C D E

4. I felt that the topics presented in the class were relevant and meaningful to my mentee.

A B C D E

5. I felt that my mentee grasped and understood the lessons presented in each class session.

A B C D E

6. I felt that the Pastor's Class adequately prepared my mentee for making a Confession of Faith and being Baptized.

A B C D E

Please provide short answers to the following questions:

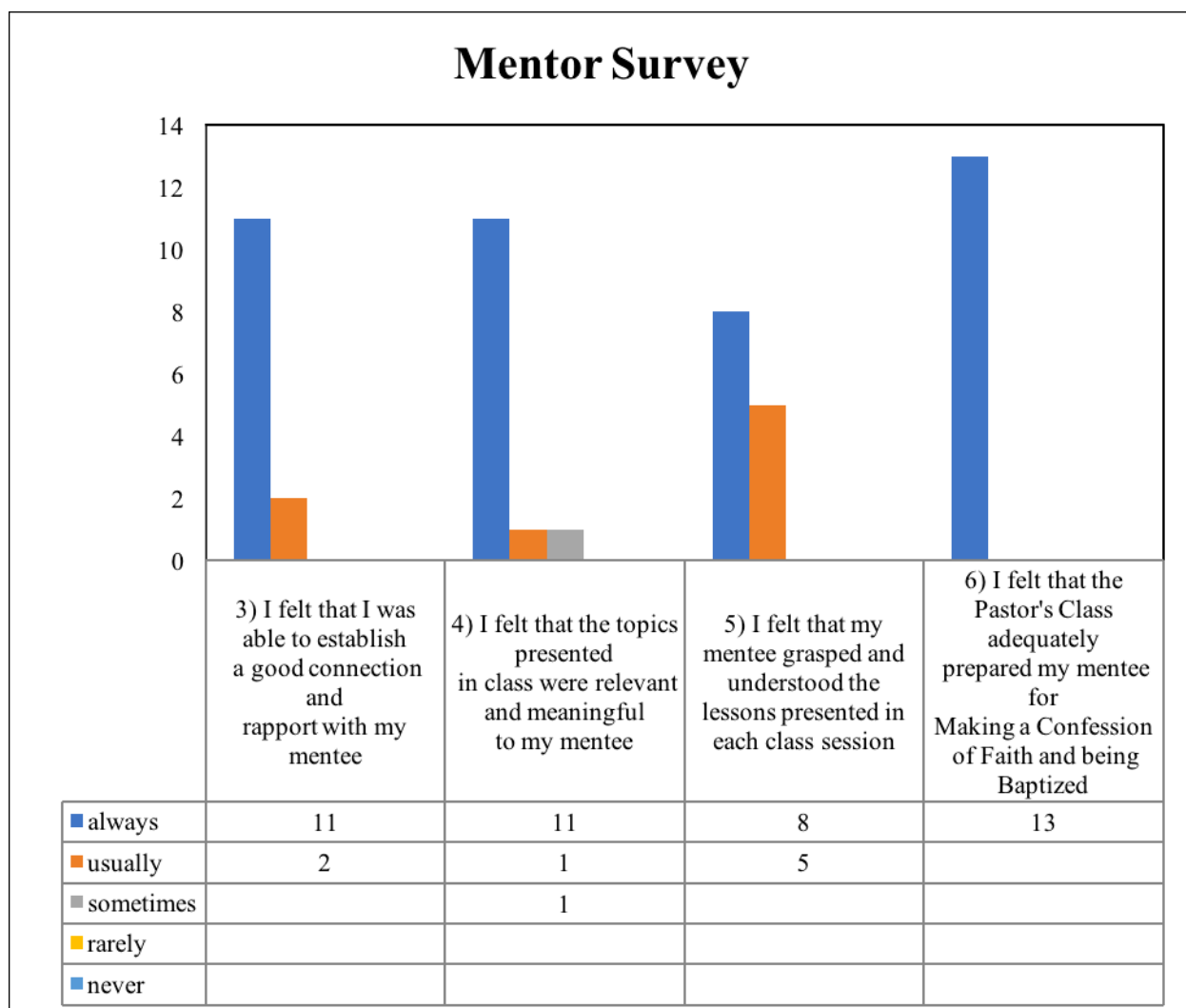
7. Are there other topics you felt should have been included in the class but were not?

_____ If so, please list a few of the topics:

8. Are there aspects of the class you feel were not relevant and/or should not be included in the class? _____ If so, which aspects of the class are you referring to?

9. Is there anything that may have made your experience as a mentor better or easier for you?

_____ If so, what?



Responses to Mentor Essay Questions

There were 11 yes responses to question 1. One mentor was possibly moving out of town and the other had questions about time commitment. The answers to question 2 were unanimous yes.

7. Are there other topics you felt should have been included in the class but were not? If so, please list a few of the topics:

- Five *no* replies
- I think the Pastor's Class presented a wealth of information and nothing was left uncovered.
- Topics were great.
- Absolutely nothing else as the class is packed with lots of topics to cover in class and more for take home.
- I think we should discuss more about how our church is run. All the different committees and what they do to help our church's ministry. Hopefully they will be the

volunteers of the future.

- As mentors, we often learn things we didn't know/remember.
- More history of First Christian Church of North Hollywood.
- The Pastor's Class is a once in a lifetime experience and offers a unique opportunity to focus on how our church family and our youth can and do live their faith.
- Maybe more discussion about how the kids can be of service to not only their church but their community.

8. *Are there aspects of the class you feel were not relevant and/or should not be included in the class? If so, which aspect of the class are you referring to?*

- Nine *no* replies
- Fun, kept mentees interested and involved.
- I think that one additional Sunday may be needed instead of staying longer hours after church in order to keep the kids more alert.
- Lulu, my student, has an unusual learning challenge and was getting it all the way.
- I have no other mentor experience for comparison, so for me, everything was relevant.

9. *Is there anything that may have made your experience as a mentor better or easier for you? If so, what?*

- Five *no* replies
- The overall experience was informative, fun, and gratifying. Being a part of someone's spiritual journey not only benefits them, but it can strengthen your faith.
- This is a great concept, and it should be used throughout the whole church.
- Every detail was addressed to make the experience easy and more pleasant.
- Yes, to know a little about your mentee before the first day of class, since they know about their mentors beforehand.
- I think a thank you note from the mentee would be nice. It would be nice to hear from the student.
- As a mentor, I would appreciate the church history handouts, as well. Especially visual tree of church history.
- Could the mentors have handouts printed out? Also, a short First Christian Church history.
- Make the classes shorter in length; front-load your Pastor's component while the kids are fresher; and close with shorter speaker presentations. (15 minutes max)
- I wish I could have been able to connect more with my mentee. My experience was Wonderful, and I would love to be a mentor as long as I am able.

APPENDIX F

Junior Mentor Survey

1. I would volunteer to be a junior mentor again based on this years' experience.
(Circle) YES or NO

2. Based on my experience, I would recommend to my peers to consider serving as a junior mentor for the Pastor's Class.
(Circle) YES or NO

Please answer each question with one letter as follows:

- A. Always
- B. Usually
- C. Sometimes
- D. Rarely
- E. Never

3. I felt that I was able to establish a good connection and rapport with my mentee.

A B C D E

4. I felt that the topics presented in the class were relevant and meaningful to my mentee.

A B C D E

5. I felt that my mentee grasped and understood the lessons presented in each class session.

A B C D E

6. I felt that the Pastor's Class adequately prepared my mentee for making a Confession of Faith and being Baptized.

A B C D E

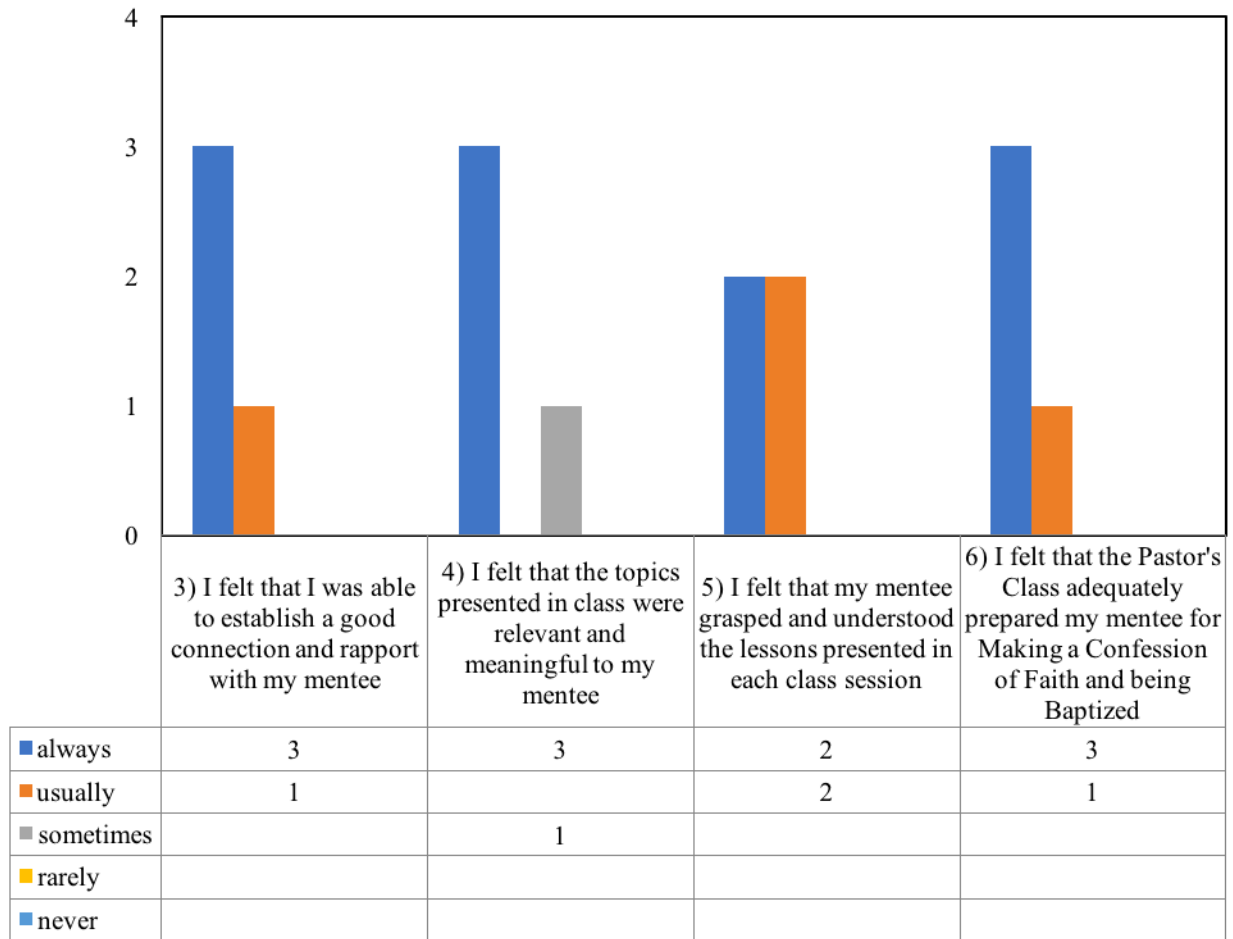
Please provide short answers to the following questions:

7. Are there other topics you felt should have been included in the class but were not? _____ If so, please list a few of the topics:

8. How does this class compare to the Pastor's Class that you took? Please be specific in your answer:

9. Is there anything that may have made your experience as a junior mentor better or easier for you? _____ If so, what?

Junior Mentor Survey



Responses to Junior Mentor Essay Questions

The answers to questions 1 and 2 above were unanimous *yes* answers

7. *Are there other topics you felt should have been included in the class but were not?*

- Three *no* responses
- Yes. . . cover more topics like community service

8. *If you were part of a discipleship class preparing you for making your confession and being baptized, how did this class compare?*

- Many of the topics were similar, but this was more fun and enlightening.
- It was similar but longer, covered more subjects, and was more in depth.
- This class was greatly undated and improved and much more adopted to the kids and their interest.
- It was a much deeper, spiritual class, and I believe better prepared the students for their baptism.

9. *Is there anything that may have made your experience as a junior mentor better or easier for you?*

- One *no* response
- It was all good. Perhaps giving the junior mentors more responsibilities would be nice.
- I think the experience was great as a junior mentor.

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